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For Contributors

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For Readers

George J. Becker, professor and chairman at Swarthmore, is the author of articles on Dreiser, Lewis, Bellamy, Cooper, Tourgee, and others in *CE*, *AL*, *MLQ*, *AS*, *TCL*, etc. His degrees are all from U. Washington. Giles Sinclair published an article on Chaucer in *CE* in 1954. With a Ph.D. from Michigan, he taught at Kansas State before Humboldt State, where he is chairman of the Language Arts Division and co-ordinator of composition. Paul G. Ruggiers has also published on Chaucer in *CE* before. Associate professor at Oklahoma, he took his degrees at Washington and Jefferson, and Cornell. He is the author of two books on medieval subjects. Jerome Taylor is an assistant professor at Notre Dame and is working toward his Ph.D. at Chicago. He is the co-editor of a forthcoming anthology of articles on Chaucer to be published as a paperback textbook by the Notre Dame Press. R. W. Lewis, instructor at Nebraska, has a B.A. from Pittsburgh and an M.A. from Columbia. Byron Guyer, associate professor and chairman at Los Angeles State, has his degrees from or has taught at most of the

other California institutions. He has published two articles on Francis Jeffrey, in *HLQ* and *MLQ*. John T. Frederick, former contributor and adviser to *CE*, and editor of *The Midland* for many years, is a professor at Notre Dame, with degrees from S.U. Iowa. John Herrmann, assistant professor at Long Beach State, wrote a novel as his Ph.D. thesis at Iowa and has published a half-dozen short stories. William Frost, another California teacher (associate professor at Santa Barbara), went to Bowdoin, Columbia, and Yale. Author of a number of items in *CE*, he has published books on Dryden and Greville, and articles on Pope, Chaucer, and Shakespeare. A. M. Tibbetts went to S.U. Iowa, taught there, and is now assistant professor at Western Illinois. Robert J. Geist, associate professor at Michigan State, has published books and articles on language. Robert E. Knoll is associate professor at Nebraska, holder of graduate degrees from Minnesota, and author of the textbook *Contrasts* (1955) and the biography of Robert McAlmon (1957).

For Contributors and Readers

College English (current circulation over 6,000) is one of four magazines published by NCTE. The Council, founded in 1911, is the only organization devoted to English teaching from the first to the last grade, and it has over 43,000 members and subscribers. In 1912 the Council began publishing *The English Journal*, which started a college edition in 1928, splitting into *EJ* and *CE* in 1938. *EJ*, addressed to teachers in secondary schools, is edited by Dwight Burton, Florida State University, and *Elementary English* comes from John DeBoer, University of Illinois. A

membership in the Council (\$4.00) includes a subscription to *CE*, *EJ*, or *EE*; the privilege of obtaining a second magazine for \$2.00; and discounts on numerous books, records, literary maps, and the like. Closely allied to *CE* is *CCC*, the bulletin of the NCTE subsidiary, The Conference on College Composition and Communication. *CCC* is published quarterly, and subscriptions are \$2.00. Writers of articles and notes in this field should consider sending them to the editor, Francis E. Bowman, Duke University, as an alternative to *CE*.

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COLLEGE ENGLISH

Volume 19

APRIL 1958

Number 7

William Dean Howells: The Awakening of Conscience

GEORGE J. BECKER

On 4 November 1887 a revolution occurred in American literature. William Dean Howells, who had succeeded Lowell as editor of *The Atlantic Monthly*, who had been offered the succession to the Harvard chair occupied by the exalted figures of Ticknor, Longfellow, and Lowell, and who was already settling into the dignity of dean of American letters which he was to hold for the next thirty years—William Dean Howells, archpriest of the genteel tradition, deserted the study for the arena and published an open letter defending the Chicago anarchists in the *New York Herald-Tribune*. This letter failed of its hoped-for result and the executions took place. Howells wrote to his father on 13 November: "All is over now, except the judgment that begins at once for every unjust and evil deed, and goes on forever. The historical perspective is that this free Republic has killed five men for their opinions." In another letter a few days later he characterized the executions as "civic murder," calling them "an atrocious piece of frenzy and cruelty, for which we must stand ashamed forever before history. But it's no use. I can't write about it. Some day I hope to do justice to these irreparably wronged men."

He never carried out that hope, nor was it to be expected that this gentle exponent of realism of the commonplace, this dramatist of summer-hotel flirtations, of maidenly reserves and hesita-

tions, could handle such a theme. Yet in a sense Howells did keep faith. Whatever the limitations of his example, he was the first American novelist of established reputation to desert traditional subject-matter and explore the workings and the results of the new industrial society. He stands for the aroused conscience and intelligence of late-nineteenth-century America, slowly reacting to the realization that the dream and the reality were not the same and seeking painfully and hesitantly to find the reason and so to put the country back on the right path. For ten years this fifty-year-old novelist, forced, as he says, "beyond myself and my miserable literary idolatries of the past," devoted his talent to picturing and analyzing this new and unlovely America whose existence he could not in honesty deny.

At twenty-five and in Venice, Howells had written:

Try not to think of the Americans' faults—they are a people so much purer and nobler and truer than any other, that I think they will be pardoned the wrong they do. I'm getting disgusted with this stupid Europe, and I am growing to hate it . . . The less we know of Europe, the better for our civilization; and the fewer German customs that take root among us, the better for our decency . . . There is no life in the whole world so cheerful, so social, so beautiful as the American.

Whatever the accuracy of this assessment, it is what he and his contempo-

aries wished to think. Had it not been for his creed of honest observation of the life around him, his immersion in literature might have protected him for all his days. But he did look about him, impelled by the sound reportorial sense which was the basis of his realism and was characteristic of all of his novels, whether critical or not. In fact, it can be argued that all of his writing does contain at least implicit criticism of the social base of the community and that the ideals overtly stated in the Utopian romances had been slowly germinating in the earlier works. He set out to be an analyst of American manners. Gradually he came to see the less smiling aspects of life. He was early disturbed by the evidence of class stratification and the emergence of a new kind of man and a new morality. One of the remarkable things about his handling of these subjects was that he did not readily condemn; he observed, was troubled, wondered perhaps if the old order was altogether good, and in one novel at least came to a grudging acceptance of the new. During the inevitable eclipse into which Howells's reputation fell after his death in 1920, it has been customary to accuse him of myopia, sentimentalism, pussy-footing, and ineffectuality. Actually, as we shall see, Howells made some of the most cutting criticisms of American ways ever written, though he did not use a sledge-hammer. He wrote what he saw, not with fury as did Mark Twain, but often with deft irony and deceptive gentleness, so deceptive, indeed, that the reader is often unaware until much later of the welt raised on his conscience.

A probing, if tentative, treatment of the problem of social classes is to be found in *The Minister's Charge*, or *The Apprenticeship of Lemuel Barker* (1887), the first of Howells's overtly critical novels. The problem is enunciated by the Reverend Mr. Sewell, who is not at all sure that he should have encour-

aged young Lemuel to move to the city and who wonders "if the particles of this mighty cosmos have been adjusted by the divine wisdom, what are we to say of the temerity that disturbs the least of them?" From an immediate point of view, he is disturbed at his inability to find any common ground with Lemuel. They are as unlike as if they were members of two different species, which leads the minister to assail prevailing education as unchristian and civilization as pagan, since both agencies ought to bring people together, but in fact seem to put them more widely apart. His conclusion is that "Every one of us dwells in an impenetrable solitude!"

What radically undermines Sewell's sense of cosmic subordination is the boy's amazing ability to adapt himself, superficially at least, to the behavior of the minister's own level of society. In a few months Lemuel becomes reader and companion to old Bromfield Corey and is an indispensable part of that Brahmin household. At the same time he becomes involved with two common girls from his own village who have no taste, delicacy, or nascent gentility. In the end he breaks both with the girls and with the Sewell-Corey connection and retires to Willoughby Pastures to ponder his place in a largely indifferent universe.

It is this uneasy vacillation between the fixed code of the privileged and the potentialities of the outsider which defeats the novel and yet gives it its importance. It bespeaks a Howells facing a new phenomenon and not yet knowing what to make of it, by implication beginning to doubt the rigid decorum of his adopted society and recognizing that life and promise exist outside its narrow confines. It leads the fictional Reverend Sewell to enunciate a doctrine of complicity to the effect that no man stands apart from his fellows but that each is "bound to the highest and lowest by ties that centred in the hand of God."

Before developing this doctrine, we should look outside the body of social fiction *per se* for a late statement on the subject of changing mores in *The Landlord at Lion's Head* (1897), one of the author's finest and most mature pieces of work. In this account of the young manhood of Jeff Durgin, whose mother takes in summer boarders at their farm in the White Mountains, we find an outsider who remains an outsider, who glories in being a "jay" and refuses to give lipservice to the code of gentility. When charged with being a savage and resistant to the ways of gentle folk, Jeff asks with a sneer whether the great fortunes were made by keeping the Commandments, and goes on to enunciate a morality which Howells and his contemporaries like Henry Adams saw practiced all around them:

You pay, or you don't pay, just as it happens. If you get hit soon after you've done wrong, you think it's retribution, and if it holds off till you've forgotten all about it, you think it's a strange Providence, and you puzzle over it, but you don't reform . . . If you're a strong man, you get there, and if you're a weak man, all the righteousness in the universe won't help you.

By the end of the novel the author's spokesman has pondered these words and concluded that Jeff's success does not indicate a lack of moral government in the universe. Rather it is a part of the order of things, for such success is ultimately illusory and such a tree bears Dead Sea apples. Howells wisely drops the subject there, leaving the demonstration to the more blunt and powerful pen of Theodore Dreiser.

The apparent success of such a character does not nullify the doctrine of complicity; indeed, Howells's social novels are first of all a reaction against the example and effects of the activities of self-regarding people like Jeff. The second of the social novels, *Annie Kilburn* (1888), makes a positive statement

of the indissoluble bonds among all men of whatever class. Annie finds her imagined role of Lady Bountiful to be as incongruous with actuality as is the statue which she had commissioned for a war memorial on the village green of her native Hatboro'. She realizes that her activities have been childish, even mischievous, and that patronage is not the way to an entente with one's fellow men; she finds also that life is not worth living if she is to be confined to communication with only members of her own class. The novel ends with her problem unresolved, for it is gradually borne in upon her that there is no solution short of radical change.

The chief utterer of this cry for justice, not alms, as Howells called it, is Mr. Peck, a maverick from Down East, who at the end gives up his ministry to go to live as a workman in a mill town. In a notable sermon he tells his congregation that justice is even holier than charity, that "in the truly Christian state, there shall be no more asking and no more giving, no more gratitude and no more merit, no more charity, but only and evermore justice; all shall share alike, and want and luxury and killing toil and heartless indolence shall all cease together." Such a statement leaves no question about the directness of Howells's challenge in this book or of his reduction of the pretensions of privilege. In one stride he has gone far beyond the tentative and seemingly superficial probings of *The Minister's Charge*, recognizing economic inequality as the scourge of contemporary existence, and seeing his time as "an age of seeming preparation for indefinite war."

By common consent, *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1890), his next work, is this author's most significant contribution to social criticism. At first blush, it seems a backward step by reason of its leisureliness and indirection. The novelist devotes one hundred pages to

the trials and comedies of house-hunting in New York on the part of his transplanted Bostonians, the Marches (who appeared in several earlier works). The main action involves the creation and publication of a magazine, *Every Other Week*, of which March is editor, and except for the vivid portrayal of incidents in a street-car strike, the book can scarcely be said to deal directly with social issues at all. Yet this apparent indirection is what gives the novel its strength. The hazard of new fortunes is more than a removal from Boston to New York, such as Howells himself had made a few months earlier. It is a recognition that there is a new America for which the old formulas are insufficient either as descriptions or as codes of behavior. That new America is what the author never tires of calling "an economic chance-world," in which highly volatile elements combine in crazy and unexpected ways, one in which people trained under the old social and moral discipline find themselves unable to cope with new and belligerent forces. Basil March is such a man, but since he has curiosity and intelligence, he attempts to understand the new society. It is he who passes judgment on it, and it is through his eyes that we see the new kinds of persons who are the mainsprings of its action.

Of the gallery of characters who embody economic attitudes, Lindau, the Socialist, is a new phenomenon in American fiction. On the whole he is a sympathetic figure, though it is pointed out that the injustice against which he fought could not be righted through violence without committing a greater wrong. The figure of Dryfoos is likewise an original, the first robber baron to appear in fiction. His creed is a simple one: he believes that business and life are a dog-eat-dog game and he gives no quarter. He is a disturbing phenomenon to March, who doubts that any man is better for having made money

as Dryfoos has done, or any wiser. "I don't know just the point he's reached in his evolution from grub to beetle, but I do know that so far as it's gone the process must have involved a bewildering change of ideals and criterions. . . . He must have undergone a moral deterioration, an atrophy of the generous instincts, and I don't see why it shouldn't have reached his mental make-up. He has sharpened, but he has narrowed; his sagacity has turned into suspicion, his caution to meanness, his courage to ferocity. That's the way I philosophize a man of Dryfoos's experience, and I am not very proud when I realize that such a man and his experience are the ideal and ambition of most Americans."

This gallery of originals is completed by Colonel Woodburn, whose function is to represent a point of view similar to what would be called fascist today. Hating commercial society as much as Lindau or Dryfoos's son Conrad, he looks back to the ante-bellum South, where a perfect system was in the making, though even it was infected with commercialism. Now that virus has undermined the whole country; the dollar is the sole measure of value. Like Lindau, he awaits the collapse of the old order through the growth of monopolies, but he hopes to rebuild upon a principle of responsibility, with the working-classes responsible to the leisure class for the support of its dignity in peace and subject to its command in war. In respect to an immediate practical problem, the street-car strike, his approach is simple: seize the lines and man them with policemen until the strike is over.

After this general exploration of the types to be found in the new society Howells turned for his next novel to a close examination of one of its specific human products. *The Quality of Mercy* (1892) gives a close-up of the defalcator in the person of Northwick, who had been mentioned casually in *Annie Kilburn* as the Croesus of Hatboro'. The

point of the novel is that Northwick is the inevitable product of his society. He is sufficiently assimilated to pass as a college man, but he is all surface. He is characterized as one of the *least* remarkable of men since he represents what the American egotist will increasingly come to, now that he desires to be rich instead of great. An editorial points out that there is something rotten at the core of our civilization when every morning's paper brings a story of defalcation somewhere in the country. Even more damning is the judgment of Putney, the village lawyer and a man who knows something of human frailty through his own addiction to alcohol: "He just seems to be a kind of—incident; and a pretty common kind. He was a mere creature of circumstances—like the rest of us! His environment made him rich, and his environment made him a rogue. Sometimes I think there *was* nothing to Northwick, except what happened to him."

The World of Chance (1893), fifth and last of these social novels, reaches no such heights of merciless castigation, but instead levels a pointed attack at some of the tenets of economic orthodoxy. It seeks to demolish the arguments of the classical economist by showing that economic behavior and institutions are no more a part of immutable law than any other sort of random behavior. The erratic spins of the wheel of fortune by which Shelley Ray, a young newspaperman from the Middlewest, succeeds with his novel furnish the incidents of the story, which implies that chance rules in the larger arena of affairs just as it does in the publication of *A Modern Romeo*. Everything is geared to this theme. As he is crossing to New York on the ferry, Ray hears a small businessman, the manufacturer of "Fashion's Pansy" (a bustle), who is facing bankruptcy, declare of the so-called law of supply and demand: "There's about as much of a law to it as there is to three-card monte." At the end of the novel the publisher

voices the same belief, pointing out that luck rules in business, which is really no more than buying on the chance of selling at a profit: "The political economists talk about laws of business; but there are no laws of business. There is nothing but chances, and no amount of wisdom can forecast them or control them."

A second target is the principle of competition, which is assailed by David Hughes, who at sixty-nine, after a lifetime of dedication to communitarian experiments, has decided that they are the wrong way to go about economic reform, since they have turned out to be nothing but aggrandized individuals, prospering in competition with like individuals, who have no genuine regard for the whole human family. "Competition," he declares, "is the Afreet that the forces of civilization have bottled up after a dangerous struggle, and he is always making fine promises of what he will do for you if you will let him out. The fact is he will do nothing but mischief, because that is his nature. . . . Competition enslaves, monopoly liberates. We must, therefore, have the greatest possible monopoly; one that includes the whole people economically as they are now included politically."

These five novels assailed both the fruits and foundations of the contemporary economic order in terms which permitted of no qualification and no evasion. It remained for Howells both to reinforce his criticisms and to give body to his vision of a good society in his two Utopian romances. In these he uses the time-honored device of a visitor from afar, whose logical mind and humanitarian spirit recoil from the anomalies of the American system. *Through the Eye of the Needle* is the more interesting of the two works. In it a rich man, Mr. Thrall, and his dependents do enter into the kingdom of heaven, though with mixed feelings, when their yacht is stranded on Altrurian

shores. Mrs. Thrall is never able to understand that the spectacle of her life of moneyed inactivity surrounded by toadying servants is repugnant to good morals, especially since, as she points out, Mr. Thrall could buy and sell this primitive little country several times over. Some of the servants, notably the ladies' maids, also find it impossible to undergo an Altrurian rebirth, but most of the group adjust themselves readily, and the chef becomes a famous and much-sought-after man by virtue of his scientific attainments in the realm of mushroom cookery. At the end of six months even Mr. Thrall is happier than he has been since the first days of his youth; he feels neither rich nor poor in the atmosphere of perfect safety from want, and he admits that he had long recognized that it was impossible for him to do good with his great fortune or yet to escape from the burdens which it imposed on him.

From these two works and from other statements, we can make at least a tentative reconstruction of what Howells's social ideal was. It is clear that long before Sinclair Lewis sounded the cry for revolt from the village, Howells was hankering for a return to it. That was his first spontaneous reaction to the desolation of desolation which he saw around him, that the spirit of neighborliness had departed from American life and that it must be recaptured, with the barriers of class division and competitive goals being pushed aside. It must be observed that he never altogether receded from this position, although intellectual he came to recognize it as unattainable. In fact, if one seeks an answer as to why Howells's active social revolt came to an end after ten years, it is to be found in part at least in the realization that what he wished for would never be. There is a note of resignation in his revaluation of Bellamy's Utopia which he made in the introduction to a posthumous volume of the

latter's stories in 1898. Howells says that at first he did not feel the attraction of the material side of the promise in *Looking Backward* and would have preferred the millennium simpler and less dependent on modern inventions, which are "sorry patches on the rags of our outworn civilization, or only toys to amuse our greed and vacancy." He has come since to think them not so vicious or so foolish when harmlessly come by, and he sees now that they must inevitably appeal to lives hitherto starved of them. He is forced to conclude, therefore, that Bellamy built with a thorough sense of the human level which he was to influence with such power, "that American level which his book found in every Christian land."

One of Howells's last novels, *New Leaf Mills*, published in 1913, is an even clearer relinquishment of his dream of a simple village America. Closely paralleling his father's experience in the Western Reserve, it tells the story of Owen Powell, a Swedenborgian, who after the failure of his small-town business in the years before the Civil War undertakes to create a community in which he is to be joined by his brothers and other like-minded men. He settles his family on a property provided with saw and paper mills, where they live in a primitiveness of condition which his wife resents as something belonging to an earlier stage of their lives and of the nation's progress. The people of the neighborhood are boorish and suspicious of Owen's refined mind, and though the dreamer there finds a beautiful harmony of nature which enchants him, he fails to provide an adequate economic basis for his family and sees his project fail before it has ever really gotten under way. At the end his young son must go to the city to find work, soon bringing the entire family away from the dream of a backwoods Utopia. Owen himself says of his life there, "This has been a beautiful dream," admitting that

"that dream has passed, and we can't dream it over again."

All this must be borne in mind when we assert that the village and village equality were Howells' ideal, but it must not be taken as a denial of that statement. After he left the Western Reserve in his early twenties, Howells' experience was almost entirely of the city, in Europe or on the Atlantic seaboard. Nonetheless, the days of his youth were always with him in memory and provided material for a great many of his most delightful works, as well as an ever-present comparison for the social atomization which he saw in urban and industrial society. Altruria is conceived in that earlier image, and the mother of Mrs. Homos, who goes there from America, accepts its simple life "with the joy of the child," asserting that it takes her back to the America which she used to know. Neighborliness is the essential quality of Altrurianism, which looks upon human beings as a large family. The village is the Altrurian ideal, and reduction of cities is a basic Altrurian policy. In short, the whole civilization is an "outgrowth of the neighborly instinct," the alternative to which, Howells consistently asserts, is a predacious and stultifying social mechanism.

It is necessary to qualify the strictures against the latter, which have been reviewed in full measure, by pointing out that the novelist frequently emphasizes that conditions are not as bad as they logically should be because there is a saving residual neighborliness even in a world of dog-eat-dog competition. For example, David Hughes exclaims in *The World of Chance*, "There is a whole heaven of mercy and loving kindness in human nature waiting to open itself: we know a little of what it may be when a man or woman rises superior to circumstances and risks a generous word or deed in a selfish world. Then for a moment we have a glimpse of the true life of the race." And Mr. Homos in his

critical letters home admits that in America, "which is the plutocratic world par excellence," human instincts refuse to be bound in iron and the system is actually better than might be expected or, given its theoretical foundations, should be.

Emotionally oriented toward simple village neighborliness, Howells gravitated intellectually toward a fairly orthodox Socialism, subject to the proviso that it be achieved by non-violent means. Hamlin Garland, who early tried to win him to a belief in the single tax, reported that Howells was more socialistic than he in believing that reform should go further toward nationalization of communications and basic industries. It is clear, however, that the term "Socialism" had no rigid doctrinal denotation for Howells. In a letter to his father in 1890 he characterized himself and Twain and their respective wives as "theoretical socialists, and practical aristocrats," adding that "it is a comfort to be right theoretically, and to be ashamed of one's self practically." In another letter, he indicates that the Christian Socialists are more to his liking than the Bellamy Nationalists, but doubts that he will act openly with either: "The Christian Socialists have loaded up with the creed of the church, the very terms of which revolt me, and the Nationalists seem pinned in faith to Bellamy's dream. But the salvation of the world will not be worked out that way." Probably William Morris, with his indictment of contemporary civilization on esthetic as well as moral grounds and his assumption that men are all fit for the pleasures of craftsmanship, was nearest in temper to Howells. Contemporaries, however, credited practically all of his ideas on human equality and brotherhood to Tolstoi, and Howells repeatedly asserted his reverence for the Russian: "Both as an artist and as a moralist I must acknowledge my deep indebtedness to him."

Whatever the source or sources of his ideas—and simple observation of the way society functioned must not be left out of account—Howells is adamant in his denial of competition as the proper basis for civilization. In a preface to the two Altrurian novels written for a projected complete works in 1912, he asserts that both books are born of "the same abiding conviction—the conviction that the economic solution of the 'riddle of the painful earth' is to be by emulation and not by competition." He finds in general that as things stand both wage-payers and wage-takers are guilty of supporting the structure of competitive struggle for wealth, observing that strikes in no way threaten the plutocratic principle. He makes many of the same points that Bellamy made concerning the elimination of shoddy and ugly products with the ending of competition, citing the "Saturday night shoe" (one which is worn out by Sunday morning) as a symbol of the tawdriness of the whole civilization.

A corollary of this judgment is his belief in economic and social equality. He begins an article entitled "The Man of Letters as a Man of Business" with the statement: "I think that every man ought to work for a living, without exception, and that, when he has once avouched his willingness to work, society should provide him with work and warrant him a living. I do not think any man ought to live by an art. A man's art should be his privilege, when he has proven his fitness to exercise it, and has otherwise earned his daily bread; and its results should be free to all." Believing that everyone should receive his share with "the justice and impartiality of a well-ordered family," he assails his countrymen for characterizing as the dead-level of equality "the condition in which all would be as the angels of God," insisting that economic equality is the mother of all other equalities, since

it removes many adventitious barriers to the true development of the individual.

In the 1895 essay "The Nature of Liberty," Howells erects the revolutionary watchwords of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity into an almost mystical trinity. The first occupies a position of instrumentality, for he believes it to be meaningless and delusory unless conceived of as leading to the other goals. In fact, he finds liberty and poverty to be incompatible, since "liberty is for those who have the means of livelihood," and the violent unrest betraying itself in labor disturbances is nothing but the effort of the working classes to win for themselves the liberty which they think their employers have. "Equality is the logic of liberty, and liberty cannot stop short of it without ceasing to be. It can confer no lasting good, no final blessing, until it has been exchanged for such equality." From this consideration springs his belief that "all should own the means which form the opportunity and safety of each."

Just as the liberty which does not eventuate in equality is incomplete, so equality must in turn lead to fraternity. In an 1896 article Howells envisages the equality of the future as "the enlargement of good society to the whole of humanity." In the past men have taken care of other men as jailers. Now civilization is at the parting of the ways: It must either go forward to perfect and universal brotherhood, or regress to the Cainic state of savage society. Such fraternity, moreover, has a supernatural and mystical base; men are bound together in that each does his Father's bidding—which is nothing but a more socially oriented restatement of Emerson's image of all men's being inlets in the self-same sea. Howells set no limitation on this conception, and at the time of the nascent American imperialism as a result of the Spanish-American war, he opposed the extension of our imperium with grave vehemence. He was

equally opposed to any Anglo-American or Aryan doctrine of superiority, insisting that such a concept would mean slavery for ourselves as well as for the physically or economically enslaved, and asserting that a federation of the world, in which every nation would be equally a power, was the only solidarity which we could safely hope for.

This country has produced more shocking muck-rakers; it has produced those more skilled in social analysis by means of Socialist dialectic; and in Belamy at any rate it has produced a writer more able to give concrete em-

bodiment to the aspirations of the man in the street. But no one can excel William Dean Howells in the rare combination of gentleness wedded to passion, of reproach which stings the conscience without blinding vision, and of firm belief in the intelligence and worth of man. As was said of him at a memorial meeting of the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 1922, he was "a grown-up man of power," both in his perception of social and economic wrong and in his decision to use his talent and his reputation to arouse his countrymen to recognition of that wrong.

An Ounce and a Pound: High-School and College English

GILES M. SINCLAIR

The college teacher of English who cultivates a cold detachment for the plight of his harassed colleagues in the high schools is not unlike a physician who spends his days administering malaria shots while ignoring the morasses around him which breed the disease. The bland assurance with which the colleges, particularly the state-supported schools, assume that the mere entrance into the sacred wood will transform the mediocre high-school student into a passable college student is both pathetic and outrageous. Three months and possibly three hundred miles are all that separate high-school senior English from freshman composition; that the two courses need closer correlation should be obvious even to the students; that it should be necessary to convince high-school and college teachers of the fact is discouraging.

Certainly administrators of college English departments must find it discouraging to see the ever-increasing

number of faculty hours devoted to remedial courses. At one Midwest institution of which I have personal knowledge, 65% of the total English faculty load is devoted to remedial sections. At a highly-respected university in California, 20% of the entering freshmen go into remedial English. In a hundred college catalogs chosen at random, I found none which did not offer a remedial course. Although catalogs offer no clue as to the total number of such courses or the degree to which they infringe on the college schedule, it seems likely that from 20 to 50 per cent of college composition is being taught at the high-school level. The inclusion of a high-school English course in the college curriculum is, of course, one means of articulating the programs, but apparently not a satisfactory one from the standpoint of student, college, or high school.

The conditions which have given rise to this unfortunate situation are so

complex that it is not wise to point to certain elements and call them "causes." Nevertheless, four rather common situations appear to be involved. First of these is the undoubted overcrowding of the high schools. Scarcely a community in our country has not been faced with larger and larger numbers of young people crowding into existing facilities and overcrowding new ones as fast as bond issues can be wheedled from the public to provide them. Split days are only a more obvious result of this pressure. Class sizes, despite pious intentions, creep up as perplexed administrators find it necessary to slip one or two or a few more into a room somewhere. The pressure of creating additional classes in the basic subjects leads to classes being "covered" by anyone available—after all, anyone can teach English. The five classes of the trained teacher are split between the drama coach, the home ec teacher, and the guidance counselor.

In addition to the difficulties caused by an expanding school population, another sociological problem is posed by the increased mobility of our population since 1941. The fact that few Americans die in the house in which they were born was once amazing; now few high-school students graduate from the same school system in which they began school. Although this problem is more acute in some areas than in others, the student whose high-school experience is broken is less likely to be perceived as an individual than the one whose progress, or lack of it, successive teachers in the same school system have been aware of.

A less important difficulty of the colleges is that of dealing with the junior-college transfer. Where the junior college is sufficiently independent of the secondary school to offer collegiate level work, there is no problem at all. However, in some cases, the junior college becomes a thirteenth or fourteenth year of the secondary school, offering pri-

marily terminal courses which unfortunately may look just like collegiate courses to college registrars. A digression at this point on the subject of the "double-think" operating in collegiate circles is tempting, but I shall resist it.

Added to these difficulties are those created by certain practitioners of the theory of education as experience. Dewey himself cautioned in *Experience and Education* that "the belief that all genuine education comes through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative." Certainly the channeling of students, or permitting them to channel themselves, into certain kinds of "practical" courses as opposed to the regular English courses involving the close reading of literature and emphasis on clear written expression which are mistakenly thought of as being only college preparatory is what Dewey would have characterized as "mis-educative experiences." And practically, with the increasing social pressure on young people of all levels of ability to attempt college and the praiseworthy but difficult attitude of legislators that public-supported colleges must accept every high-school graduate, many of these "experience"-trained young people turn up on our doorstep in September.

Following the first attempt at articulation through the college remedial class, the most recent step has been toward disarticulation. Those schools whose enrollment was approaching such Gargantuan proportions that a breathing spell was anticipated, forthwith decided to toss the entire problem back to the secondary schools. The University of California, though offering the classes, makes the student pay the cost of instruction; Illinois, with great fanfare, prepares to abandon all remedial work; the University of Washington is eliminating remedial classes from the regular schedule in 1958, although they will still be available in evening sessions. A

member of the Department of Finance, which controls the purse strings of the California state colleges, has suggested a similar move at these institutions in the interest of economy.

Although the "sink or swim" approach may shift the college burden, it fails to attack the problem directly. The college can do little to ease the over-crowded conditions of the high schools and nothing to prevent children accompanying their parents on the migration to new industries or more attractive climates. The junior-college transfer problem is part of a complex readjustment in evaluation of student achievement which the colleges must sometime face on a level other than the arithmetic of grade-point hours. Only the problem of the student who for various reasons avoids or fails to receive the training in reading and writing which the high schools now offer can be attacked directly.

And I feel rather strongly that the high schools and the colleges can to a large extent solve the articulation problem if they see it as a common one, attempt to make a wise division of responsibility (not blame), and concentrate on those aspects of the solution which can be solved directly. Fundamentally, two groups must be convinced of the need for every high-school student who receives a diploma having had a well-directed experience in reading adult material and having developed sufficient skill in writing expression so that he is not handicapped in seeking those opportunities in which such skills are necessary. The first group to convince is that heterogeneous body of administrators, advisers, and counselors who set up programs and assign or counsel students into them. The second group who must be convinced are the high-school students without clear educational objectives who wind up in the college instructor's office lamenting the fact that "they didn't teach me to write in high school."

As illustration of a possible approach,

I would like to summarize our experiences at a small (1400 students) state-supported institution, offering liberal arts programs but largely vocational in nature and drawing students from high schools differing greatly in size and orientation. To begin with, we were much influenced by what we had read about similar programs in Minnesota and in New Jersey.¹ As a first step, it was decided that instead of waiting for our problems to come to us, we would go out and find them. In December all interested high-school students in the area were invited to the college to take the English placement tests (*Cooperative English Test* plus a 400-word theme) in hope that those who were discovered to be weak could begin their remedial work before entering college. For the college, the plan had the added advantage of giving some information on which to base freshman sections. After analyzing the students' work, members of the English staff visited the participating high schools and talked with the English teachers, the administrators, and the students, explaining the nature and extent of the difficulties discovered by the test and discussing remedial procedures. The high schools then offered special classes to give direct aid to the students having weaknesses. The students in these classes were given another placement test on the completion of the course so that some of them were able to go directly into freshman English. Inasmuch as each remedial class eliminated resulted in a saving of about \$1500 to the college, even slight gains were worthwhile.

Having muddled the waters, the college staff found further steps immediately necessary. One of these was a conference between the administrators and English

¹H. B. Allen, "The Minnesota Communication Program," *Communications in General Education*, ed. Earl J. McGrath (1949), pp. 58-73; A. E. Meder, "Articulation of General Education Programs," *Journal of Educational Sociology*, XXIX (Jan. 1956), 202-208.

staff of both the high schools and the college. A result of this meeting was recognition by the secondary-school administrators that a significant number of their students were going on to college to make a new approach to the problem necessary and that remedial programs, at either the college or high school level, were only stop-gap measures. Another advantage of such meetings was the support the college teachers gave to the high-school teachers in impressing the local administration with the importance of the mastery of basic subject matter. To further assist the secondary schools at the beginning of the program, the college agreed to administer the test at the high schools rather than bring groups to the campus, although this step greatly increased the college burden.

At this time also, several other methods by which the college could assist the schools were suggested. If the weak students could be spotted in the tenth grade, teachers pointed out, the chances of helping them at that point would be much better than in their last semester of high school. Aid in preparing and evaluating a testing program throughout the high school appeared to the college staff a small effort if it helped to do away with some of the burden of bonehead English. Similarly, the college made available to the high schools the results of its experience in remedial work through syllabi, mimeographed exercises, and conference on teaching techniques.

Up to this point attention had been so focused on the problem of articulation at the lower level that a more important group, that of the superior students, was neglected. However, again increasing interchange of ideas between the high-school and college faculties led to an attempt to organize this area also. The placement test indicated that some of the high-school students were excellently prepared; to do a better job of adjusting the college program to these students, an honors course was established

so that in one semester they could fulfill the college requirements in both English and speech. Such a program encourages the good student to excel in high school and, it is hoped, will impel these better students toward college.

But the most vital measure in the articulation program was making the college and high-school teacher more articulate. To begin with, it was very necessary that the college not appear to be dictating policy to the high schools or condemning the work of the high-school teacher. When, for example, the inevitable protest arose that "The courses are just being taught to coach students to pass a test," the fact that the high-school teachers knew that the "test" was merely a normal goal at which any high-school program would legitimately aim resolved the difficulty. In most cases the high-school teacher was glad of the aid which the college could bring to bear in helping to obtain recognition of the need for more time being spent on reading and writing. On the other hand, the college teachers gained greatly in their awareness of the extent of the problem the high-school teacher faced. The facile answer and the glib assumption that all the college difficulties are the result of poorly-trained teachers do not stand up long in actual conferences of composition teachers and examination of high-school students' writing.

So far the efforts appear to have been worthwhile and sufficiently encouraging to suggest other lines of approach. The first of these may likely be the recognition for college credit of work of collegiate calibre done in high school. Such a step will take a good bit of preparatory study, but Stanford University (according to the report of its recent committee on General Education) is apparently ready to try. We have made an initial step in the honors course, and such recognition would immeasurably assist the high-school teacher in moti-

vating the superior student. Another project, and one which is already going into operation, is the return to the recommendation of the high-school English department as an adjunct to, and perhaps substitute for, our English placement program. A comparison of our test results with the high-school teachers' recommendations shows few disagreements and, it is more than likely, the recommendations are more accurate than the test.² As the schools take over the function of testing and giving special work to the students throughout their school career, the college will profit not only from having to offer fewer remedial courses but also from being able to dispense with the heavy duties of freshman placement.

At this point, however, it is necessary to add a less optimistic note. If, despite the recommendation from the high school teacher that the student is not prepared for college, legislators and college administrators force English departments to accept all graduates, we can plan on a long career of remedial English. Surveys of the college records of students who do poorly in the reme-

dial classes indicate that the majority of such students never complete a college program. Particularly is this true of the student who comes directly from high school without an interruption in his education. If English teachers can make college admission officers, high-school counselors, and others concerned aware of the implications of these studies, it may be possible to stop our problems before they arrive.

On the at present theoretic level, an interchange of college and high-school personnel would work wonders of articulation. Away from the rarified generalizations of the ordinary conference, specific discussion of what we both actually do in class would be helpful to everyone. If, for example, one of our new Ph.D.'s could teach a class in literature to the superior students of a certain area, while an experienced high-school teacher was bringing knowledge of methods and student interests to some of our college sections, both would return with a heightened appreciation of the problems of the other. Such understanding is perhaps the heart of the problem.

I hope that I have given no one the idea that others have not tried similar plans, or that we hope to discontinue our remedial sections overnight. Nevertheless, it is with genuine dismay that I see certain major institutions apparently eager to enlarge the gulf between the secondary school and the college. Prevention is better than cure.

²We are at present carrying on an investigation of the relative value of the objective test, theme, and teachers' recommendation in predicting success in freshman composition somewhat similar to the survey conducted at Tennessee, viz. K. L. Knickerbocker, "Placement of Freshmen in First-Quarter English," *Journal of Higher Education*, XXII (Apr. 1951), 211-215.

New Address for *College English*

After 1 June 1958, the editorial office of the magazine will have the following address:

Editor, *College English*
Trinity College
Hartford 6
Connecticut

Some Philosophical Aspects of *The Knight's Tale*

PAUL G. RUGGIERS

The reader who comes to *The Knight's Tale* anew is struck by what seems at first glance to be a certain difficulty in getting into the story. He eventually discovers that this preamble to a tale is a manifestation of Chaucer's economical artistic instinct to reduce a large body of materials in Boccaccio's *Teseida* to an essential minimum. In the opening 170 lines, not absolutely necessary except as introduction to the tale of two knights and a lady, he finds that Chaucer accomplishes a linking of story to teller (valor in arms), implants very early in the tale a resolution of warring elements in the marriage of Theseus and Hippolyte (a theme carried out in the story), introduces the influence of Fortuna in the complaint of oppressed ladies concerning the instability of this world, and asserts, if only by implication, the superiority of God's law to that of men (no man by positive law may contravene the higher, natural law observed by religious convention: the dead deserve burial). From the very beginning, Theseus, in his revenge upon the tyrant Creon becomes the defender of that law, and the reader is not surprised when Theseus becomes an interpreter of that law in the solution of the problem to be posed in the tale.¹ Whatever reduction of materials Chaucer has made, then, has not been at the expense of the tale; rather, what he has retained provides him with a substructure upon which to build. The final result is a tale carefully prepared to carry the principal philosophical burden of the

entire Canterbury pilgrimage, as well as a situation that may be further explored in the following tale.

If the industrious reader continues his comparison of Boccaccio's *Teseida* and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, he discovers a major excision in the plot: the account in the XIth Book of the *Teseida* of the flight of Arcite's soul to heaven and his laughter over the funeral procedure for his remains. This, we recall, is put to good use in the conclusion of *Troilus and Criseyde*, expanded to give the necessary religious distance to a love creed somewhat at variance with the conventional morality of Chaucer's age.

One may ask why the flight of Arcite's soul should not have been retained in its proper place instead of being used in another work. The answer might be easier if we knew the exact dates of the two works. Was it already part of *Troilus*?² Or did Chaucer, writing *The Knight's Tale* first, decide that the Boethian justification of marriage as a permanent instrument of God to insure temporal successions precluded a cosmic laughter from the lips of Arcite? Did he feel that such a cosmic laugh might be construed in this situation to mean that the most ardent attempts of man to do the will of God are part of the folly of the world as seen by a purified soul from whose eyes the scales have finally fallen away? And would it have given the impression to the reader that Arcite had indeed made off with the prize by dying, while his former comrade is faced with making the best of what he must do?

One difficulty of the reader arises thereafter from a conflation, in the

¹Cf. the attractive and convincing interpretation of the role of Theseus in the poem by Charles Muscatine, *PMLA*, LXV (1950), 921-923.

²Cf. Robert A. Pratt, *PMLA*, LXII (1947), 613.

philosophical additions drawn from Boethius, of the single Deity excogitated by Plato and Aristotle with the Deity of the Hebrew tradition, and from the relation of this single Deity to the activities of the gods of the ancient pantheon, Jupiter, Saturn, Venus, Mars, Diana, as well as the fury that starts up out of the ground. Some of this tension between the One God and many gods appears from time to time in the work itself. When later Chaucer refers to the ultimate power of God and names Him as the First Mover creating the chain of love, there can be no doubt that the addition of Boethian elements to the story, focusing upon the relation of confused and doubting men to their Deity, has caused the story to take upon itself a justification of the ways of God at the risk of a certain artistic, not to say religious, inharmony between the ancient gods and the First Mover of Boethius. On the one hand, the ancient gods and goddesses are entrusted with the functions of love, life, and death, as we see in the individual relations between Palamon and Venus, Emily and Diana, Arcite and Mars. On the other hand, the First Mover is responsible for the orderly principle in the universe and for the orderly progressions and successions of the species. How may these be explained as compatible in their operations?

A chief source of the "difference" between the effects created by the versions of Boccaccio and Chaucer is, of course, the Boethian additions, since these not only provide the philosophical depth and range not explicitly stated in the Boccaccian system of fate, but also force upon us the necessity of accommodating the pagan gods to the Providence of the Boethian God. It is, in short, the philosophical additions that give the tale whatever newness it has as a species of *moral* romance, lend to the old plot the elevation of a Platonized tradition not available in the more diffuse *Teseida*, and justify in entirely philosophical terms,

"that hooly boond virgule with which that first God man and womman bond" (E 1260-61; Robinson ed. throughout).

We cannot too often reiterate in this connection the medieval view that God is the final cause of everything, that over and beyond the disorder in the physical world and moral evil in the individual there is operative in every rational nature the eternal law making God the goal of each, through understanding of the divine commandment. By the addition of Boethian elements Chaucer has mainly emphasized the learning process and in so doing has given the story its unique cast. The relationship of these additions to the pagan machinery requires for this reader, at least, repeated explanations.

II

In the campanile at Florence there sits a statue of Jupiter dressed in monk's garb, bearing in one hand a cross and in the other a chalice. The accommodation of the pagan deity to his Christian milieu points up the kind of reception Chaucer might have expected from his audience when he read to them the prayers of Palamon, Arcite, and Emily before their respective deities. One has only to remember the history of allegory in the Middle Ages and to recall the steady process of allegorizing and moralizing at least one favorite poet, Ovid, to be convinced of the willingness of the medieval intellect to accept the implications of the gods and their activities in every realm of human experience. Ethically, theologically, even psychologically, the gods residing in their oratories may be seen as providing exempla of the infinite vicissitudes of man's existence. Venus, Mars, Diana, like the saints whose names are sprinkled through the whole body of Chaucer's work, are a means of presenting on either a pagan or Christian plane the *vera* that underlie the pilgrimage of this life. While I have no intention of equating the Christian saints with the gods of old, we may recognize that both

are means of defining the power of God to work out by various instrumentalities what His providence apprehends. When Chaucer writes of Palamon kneeling in the oratory of Venus, his audience would have had no difficulty in making an adjustment to their own practice; nor would they have failed to see that although the two knights in Chaucer's story are virtually indistinguishable in martial skill or manners, they are distinguished by the gods they choose to pray to, and by the content of their prayers. When the agents of the story pray to gods famed for particular skills or beneficences, the god chosen for appeal in a particular situation objectifies and clarifies the personality of the agent, and the choice made and expressed by each agent indicates his special character.

The description of Venus's temple with its examples of those who succumbed to love leads towards a conclusion:

Thus may ye seen that wysdom ne richesse,
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartie,
For as hir list the world than may she gye.
(A 1946-50)

And in the prayer that Palamon addresses to Venus before the battle, appealing to her as daughter of Jove, wife of Vulcan, lover of Adonis (a combination of her special favor in Parnassus, her legitimate association and her passion), we find the insistence that the power of love is greater than the destructive power of Mars. Since in Chaucer and in Boccaccio the passages dealing with the influence of Venus as goddess of love are colored by the Christian love of God, and since in the courtly code which suffuses the story the universal law of love is inescapably the road to virtue, then the implication of Palamon's prayer is that he would rather die than not do the will of God by taking Emily as his wife. It is little wonder that he is convinced in the closing moments of

the story of the virtue in necessity. If one recalls the Boethian love songs with which Chaucer opens and closes Book III of *Troilus*, one sees the justification and the wisdom of the prayer Palamon addresses to Venus. If the conclusion of the story implies that men are but instruments by which the successions and progressions are assured, then Palamon is praying with a wisdom that transcends his present knowledge of the Providence of God. If we may borrow here Ficino's observation often applied to Botticelli's painting of Venus and Mars, we discover an enduring sentiment: Venus tames Mars, but Mars never subdues Venus.³ Even Saturn whose powers are an echo of those of Mars, yields to the tearful plea of his granddaughter: "Weep now namoore, I wol thy lust ful-fille" (A 2478).

What may be deduced from Chaucer's emphasis upon the nature of each god as depicted upon the wall of each temple and the prayer addressed by the agents to a god of their choice? By separating the description of each god from the prayer addressed to him Chaucer has given emphasis to the dominant character of that god so that there can be no doubt as to the kind of choice each agent makes: one prays to the source of life, the other to the cause of death. And yet one must move warily in attributing to Arcite anything like the error in judgment, the tragic flaw of tragedy, from which flows the catastrophe and suffering of the ancient drama, a view which carries with it implications of full responsibility and control. In the agents of this story Chaucer has followed Boccaccio closely in rendering his agents so much alike that one is tempted to think of them as having no real individuality and no freedom, and therefore no culpability. More damaging to the notion of a *bona fide* tragic sense is the

³See S. R. Jayne, *University of Missouri Studies*, XIX (1944), 176-177.

lack of emphasis upon a law built upon suffering; in *The Knight's Tale* men suffer, are confused, they confess their doubts, but without an explicit answer to the questions they raise. Nevertheless, by means of the philosophical additions, Chaucer manages to bring knowledge out of pain and suffering, but without basing this knowledge upon the moral responsibility of each agent for his actions. In place of the essential freedom of his agents and their responsibility, we find the influence of the gods working out the destinies of each knight to accord with a Supreme Being's plan. The solution to the problem posed by the tale is brought about rather in the manner of the *deus ex machina*; while in Boccaccio the story has revolved mainly about the inscrutable, inescapable Will of God working its way out in the affairs of men,⁴ in Chaucer an effort has been made, by the Boethian additions mainly in parts I and IV, to justify that Will, and to accommodate the will of the human agents to it.

This problem of the will is given point by the deliberate association of the planet Mars with the god of war and by the prognostication of influence still to be exerted in future times, as are seen prefigured in the paintings on the temple wall (A 2031-39), as well as by Arcite's line to his kinsman about the "wikke aspect or disposicioun virgule. Of Saturne . . . whan that we were born" (A 1086-90), and that of Palamon reiterating it (A 1328). It was a commonly held astrological belief that the stars exert influence upon matter, and that the will and the intellect are affected only indirectly, since these are contained in corporeal organs. It is through them that men acquire individuality, a corporeal and natural individuality. But their wills, and the freedom of the will—the finest gift of God to man—along with the grace to cooperate with Deity, make

man obedient in his spiritual nature not to the stars but to his Creator. Such is substantially the view of Dante and before him of Aquinas. It is also, substantially, the view of Chaucer, although there is no single place in Chaucer where we may find explicitly stated the burden of this whole argument. It is a curious matter that in the *Troilus* and here in *The Knight's Tale*, a sardonic wit affords a screen for the author from behind which he may comment upon the affairs of men without betraying his own feelings on the matter. What high melancholy there is to be found in Chaucer's two philosophical poems derives from his reluctance or his inability to assert the view he found in Dante on the freedom of the will and the material world to which man was subject.⁵

The stars themselves are part of the material universe, and it is by virtue of the Boethian First Mover that we see the relationship of the pagan astrologized gods to the Christian Deity who is the Ultimate Power. Borrowing from Dante once again (*Mon.*, II. ix. 8) we may say that all of Fortune, ordered by Destiny, and given concrete and objective form in our story by the personalities of the gods and goddesses who order the individual actions of life, are defined by man as Fate. Actually, Fate as defined by man constitutes but a fragmentary view of the whole plan of the universe as it exists ultimately in the regulative mind of God, the design being called Providence. All the gods and goddesses used here, along with the fury that starts up out of the ground, are but manifestations of the power of the Prime Mover. It is a view that we may derive from Boethius, and it is the view of the nature of the gods that is to be found in the

⁵Theodore Wedel, *The Mediaeval Attitude towards Astrology* (1920), pp. 60-89, gives a good summary of the mediaeval adjustment to astrology. On the matter of Chaucer and determinism, see W. C. Curry, *Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences* (1926), p. 163.

⁴See H. S. Wilson, *UTQ*, XVIII (1949), 137.

Thebaid. Thus God is the ultimate source both of Arcite's death and the victory of Palamon, and it is but a poet's fiction, as St. Augustine avers (*The City of God*, IX. vii. 25), to maintain that gods "fight among themselves about the men they love or hate with keen partisan feeling."

III

When at the conclusion of *The Knight's Tale* Theseus speaks to a humbled and chastened Palamon and Emily his great poem about the relation of God to the temporal world, we are not entirely unprepared to hear him speak as the interpreter of natural law. We have seen him in the first section of the tale acting in the capacity of a divine avenger upon Creon whose positive law has denied burial to the fallen warriors. The definition he now makes of the natural law must reconcile Palamon and Emily to their future as well as place in perspective their past and that of Arcite. The degree to which we feel that his speech accomplishes this reconciliation of the past with the present marks in a sense the success or failure of the tale, and the success or failure of the shift from the destinal order to Christian Providence. We have noted a certain reluctance in Chaucer to work out explicitly and with conviction in his more or less philosophical works any argument vindicating the freedom of the will or the responsibility of each agent for his decisions. Yet whether or not he believed in man's freedom, considering Chaucer's knowledge of the argument in Boethius and Dante, we may assume that he chose in the poems with pagan backgrounds to allow the meaning to grow directly out of the situations depicted. How close he comes to the problem of responsibility may be seen by even a cursory examination of the speeches of Arcite and Palamon in the first section of the poem. In the two speeches to which I refer (A 1223-1333) Chaucer maintains a sim-

ilarity of view: each complaint arises out of the same mistaken notion: each thinks the other more fortunate, Arcite maintaining that the prison of Palamon is now his paradise, that Fortune has blessed him and will continue to do so; Palamon maintaining that Arcite is in the better situation since he can get up a force to subdue Athens and so attain Emily as his wife.

Both agents posit the hand of God in the rule of the universe, Arcite making a casual association of God and Fortune, Palamon admitting that man is subject to the capricious circumstances of this life, averring that the innocent suffer and the wicked prosper, but raising the larger question of man forced to restrain his passions for fear of divine reprisal. Palamon implies in his speech a belief in a God transcending and controlling man's experience; Arcite implies in his the dissatisfaction with the fragmentary goods of this world, the dissatisfaction that leads (in the Boethian scheme) to the singleness, the unity of God.

With the entrance of Theseus upon the scene in Part II we discover that the Providence of God is carried out into the changing bond of this world by Destiny (or Fortune) who is God's minister and that

oure appetites heer, . . .

Be it of werre, or pees, or hate, or love,
Al is this reuled by the sighte above.

(A 1670-1672)

We may note that our experience is governed ultimately by God, but more immediately by intermediary instrumentalities, whether these be divine spirits, the soul itself, nature, the motions of the stars, the powers of angels, or of other spirits (*Consolatio*, IV, pr. 6, 51-56; Loeb ed. throughout).

Finally, in the long speech of Theseus, which must be seen in the light of Egeus's remark that all that lives must die, we find elements that shed light upon the plights of Arcite and Palamon

and even justify the destiny of Emily. Arcite's protest that life consists of a blind pursuit of false felicities and that man is victim of impersonal fortune is countered by the description of a universe held in bounds by love, a universe in which nothing is left to chance and evil has no absolute existence. His life has come to an end because

"The same Prince and the Moevere . . .
Hath stablissed in this wrecched world
adoun
Certeayne dayes and duracioun
To al that is engendred in this place,
Over the whiche day they may nat pace
. . . ." (A 2994-2998)

It is the universal principle of love,⁶ too, that points the way to the reconciliation of friends in the closing moments of Arcite's life and allows to Arcite the purchase of a glorious name by death (*Consolatio*, IV, pr. 6, 51-56). In the absence of Arcite's cosmic laughter we surmise that with his now perfect knowledge he has rectified the error of assuming that good and evil are a matter of satisfying earthly wishes: he has learned that the good and the principle of love are one and the same.

For Palamon as well as for Emily the preachment is more detailed: every nature created by God reflects in its imperfection a loss of what was once perfect. The ideas that have flowed from the mind of God and have found their existence in the union of form with matter represent a long descent from the pristine purity of their original existence with God. Subject to the temporal

world thereafter, and corruptible as a result of the long descent into the world of fate, the species of things have become subject to death. And yet, out of the depths of a wise and loving Providence has come the law of successions: everything in nature seeks a continuous existence of the species in perpetuity; everything that seeks this continuity and eschews corruption aims at the unity of God (*Consolatio*, III, pr. 11, 104-107). Thus do creatures express their yearning to return to the well from which they first flowed, by imitating God's eternity. Chaucer's audience, such as were not trained in Neo-Platonic thought, might see here in allegorical fashion the fall of man from his natural perfection.

In the direct advice that Theseus now gives to Palamon and Emily—to make a virtue of necessity by desisting from struggling against the law of love, by giving up grieving over a friend whose death has not only been noted but supervised by the Creator—we discover too that God ought rather to be thanked for the grace that has brought Palamon and Emily to this state of mutual love, forbearance, and service. This too has been foreseen and provided by Providence above, no less than the death of Arcite. "Nothing," says Philosophy, "following nature, resists God." (III, pr. 12, 56)

The instrument for this progress of the species is of course matrimony. Out of the necessity of death man may yet snatch the assurance of progeny. Man has been forced to learn the divine commandment and to understand it through Theseus, spokesman of the Divine. The ineluctable necessity that rules the universe coincides with the divine will; man is free in proportion as he understands and obeys what God has ordained for him and the world in which he lives. When by becoming virtuous he obeys, he becomes in a sense master over the temporal penalty of death and directs his soul back to its source. The passions that Palamon felt must be restrained

⁶*Consolatio*, II, m. 8 is a classic statement of the law of love operating among friends, nations, and matrimonial partners. A fine treatment of "three widening concentric circles of interest" in terms of human and divine love is that of William Frost, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Knight's Tale," *RES*, XXV (1949), 289-304. Cf. Wilson, p. 143: "It is not a competition of rival merits that is being presented to us but an exemplum of the power of love which overrules all fellowships, even that of the truest of knights and devoted friends."

(A 1317) have found their proper control within the institution of matrimony as ordained by the First Mover, the lord of love.

In the end the lesson is one familiar to the pagan, Neo-Platonic world as well as to the Christian world. The toils of this world are the tests and trials by which man's spirit acquires virtue and thus achieves its purer form. The descent from the divine has led back toward the original source.

Such seems to me to be the pattern of consolation and reconciliation invested in the story by the Boethian additions. It would be curious indeed if the law of love should reconcile Palamon to the inevitability of dying as the end of man without offering him the necessity and grace, however platonized, of living. And we faintly descry the reason why Chaucer's sympathy for the living should have led him to repress that laughter from beyond.

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NCTE College Section

1958 Nominations

In May, Council members of the College Section will receive mail ballots for electing two members of the Section Committee and two Directors of the Council to represent the Section. In accordance with the requirements of the NCTE Constitution, the names of the persons chosen by the Nominating Committee are printed below. Additional nominees may be named by a petition signed by fifteen members of the Council.

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Francis E. Bowman, *Duke University*
Irwin Griggs, *Temple University*
Erwin R. Steinberg, *Carnegie Institute of Technology*
William S. Ward, *University of Kentucky*

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Francis Christensen, *University of Southern California*
Jane Dale, *Oregon College of Education*
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College English Advisers

In addition, members of the section will vote in May for advisers to the Editor of *College English*. One person is to be elected in each of the following categories:

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Renaissance: Robert Hoopes, *Stanford University*; Reverend W. J. Ong., S.J., *St. Louis University*.
Seventeenth Century: Edwin Benjamin, *Bowdoin College*; Kester Svendsen, *University of Oklahoma*.
World Literature: George Gibian, *Smith College*; Vernon Hall, Jr., *Dartmouth College*.
Fiction: Maurice Beebe, *Purdue University*; Bradford Booth, *University of California at Los Angeles*.
Teaching of Literature: Robert S. Heilman, *University of Washington*; Wright Thomas, *State University of New York, College for Teachers at Cortland*.
Linguistics: Harold Allen, *University of Minnesota*; Herbert Marshall McLuhan, *University of Toronto*.
Communication: Beverly Fisher, *Santa Monica City College*; Harrison Hayford, *Northwestern University*.

This year's Nominating Committee consisted of George Wykoff (Purdue), Frederick L. Gwynn (Virginia), and John C. Hodges (Tennessee), *Chairman*.

Round Table

ORAL READING IN THE TEACHING OF CHAUCER

JEROME TAYLOR

It has long been known that Chaucer wrote his narrative poems to be read aloud. From textual evidence, Ruth Crosby has argued not only that people in the middle ages generally "read by means of the ear rather than the eye, by hearing others read or recite rather than by reading to themselves" (*Speculum*, XI, 1936, 88), but that Chaucer in particular "wrote primarily for a listening public, and that in doing so, he actually adopted many of the tricks of style . . . of literature intended to be heard" (*Speculum*, XIII, 1938, 432). "Chaucer," Miss Crosby points out, "aims to keep us, and to an astonishing degree succeeds in keeping us exactly in the position of people listening to (not reading) a story."

What Miss Crosby says finds striking pictorial support in the Corpus Christi manuscript of Chaucer's *Troilus*. The frontispiece of this manuscript is a brilliant full-page representation of the poet standing in an elevated pulpit in a castle garden and reading the poem to a throng of diademed lords and ladies robed in gold and scarlet and blue. (There is a fine color reproduction as frontispiece to Trevelyan's *Illustrated English Social History*, 1949; there is a discussion and monochrome reproduction in Aage Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition*, 1925, pp. 19-25; see also Margaret Galway, "The 'Troilus' Frontispiece," *MLR*, XLIV, 1949, 161 ff.)

Building on the accepted fact of Chaucer's oral reading of his own poetry, Talbot Donaldson has recently called attention to the amusement-value for Chaucer's audience of differences in character and personality between the ostensible narrator (the narrative *persona*) of the *Canterbury Tales* and the historical Chaucer, familiar acquaintance of members of the court, whom they saw standing before them reading (*PMLA*, LXIX, 1954, 928-936).

It is recognized, then, that Chaucer's poetry was peculiarly adapted by him for a speaker-audience situation, and that this fact is highly relevant to critical apprecia-

tion of the poetry. What has not been generally recognized, however, is that, as a direct consequence of these two points, the oral presentation of Chaucer can be an almost phenomenal aid in teaching him. Efforts like that of the late Stanley P. Chase of Bowdoin College, who, during the 1930's and 1940's, used to conduct a one-day reading of the *Troilus* aloud, would seem to be rare. During a course in the *Troilus*, given at the University of Notre Dame during the summer of 1957, I was led, by the particular needs and limitations of the class, to experiment with oral rendering of the entire poem. The experiment showed that the students received something far beyond the revelation of "music" and rhythm commonly claimed for the oral rendition of all poetry. The oral interpretation of the *Troilus* greatly sharpened the students' view of the work precisely as an elaborately structured narrative with its own peculiar power and effect. So sharpened and vitalized did the students' perceptions become that they emerged as almost embarrassingly ready critics of Chaucer's published critics.

The class consisted of twenty-two registered students and two auditors. Only two had had previous experience with Old or Middle English. The subject matter of the course was simply Chaucer's *Troilus*. The problem was first of all to get these neophytes *through* the poem, if possible with pleasure, in the thirty rushed hours of a summer session. More importantly, however, it was to enable them to take from the poem some experience in analysis, some practice in responsible criticism, which they could transfer to all their reading in literature. If we were to aim at criticism, however, it was necessary to get the poem read considerably before the end of the term, and to get it read well enough, closely enough, to permit reasoned discussion of selected aspects of the art Chaucer put into it.

The first thing to be eliminated from the course was the flip (and flop) of the

vocabulary hunt. We did not drill through the poem with the traditional line-by-line "translation." Students were advised to buy Root's edition, which lacks a glossary but has broad margins for one's own glosses, critical as well as lexicographical. Having deprived students of a vocabulary prop, it was necessary to provide a substitute for it. In place of two hours of flip-flop in the July solitude of their dormitory rooms, they were offered a single hour, outside of and in addition to class, in which they might hear some six hundred lines of the poem read aloud each day. The place, chosen with a measure of guile, was the new air-cooled art gallery of O'Shaughnessy Hall, where, in an evening hour and with a few colorful examples of medieval and early Renaissance art in the background, students could sit about informally and listen—informally, but, as it turned out, usually with books open and pencils in hand. Words whose meanings were likeliest to be unclear were unceremoniously glossed by single modern English equivalents dropped, like stones and in parenthetical monotone, into the flow of the reading. Each morning in class, the first order of business was to clear up the meaning of passages not properly clarified in the previous night's reading. There were usually not many. Spot quizzing on selected passages revealed a high degree of comprehension—and revealed too that students, on their own initiative, had gone to Middle English glossaries or to the *OED* to double-check the meanings of particularly interesting words.

The structure of the selections for each night's reading was also indicated in the previous morning's class. Passages of dramatized or rendered narrative (scenes) were numbered consecutively throughout the poem and distinguished from passages of narrative summary and from extended narrator interpolations. It was the scenes especially which the evening readings brought to life. Details of physical or cosmic background; significant gestures or expressions; the timbre of a colloquial turn of phrase; the play and pace of the repartee between Pandarus and Criseyde; the watchfulness behind Pandarus's playful pedantry toward Troilus; sudden shifts in tonality from scene to scene or even

within scenes; the patient displays of thought and motive and feeling with which character-making decisions were rendered; the lyric loveliness, for example, of the garden scene in II, 813 ff., when Criseyde's heart was softened toward love, or of the master-scene in book III, with its dawn laments, so suggestive of *Romeo and Juliet*, and with the narrator's own cry: "O blisful nyght, of hem so longe ysought . . . ! Why ne hadde I swich oon with my soule ybought, Ye, or the leeste joie that was there?"

At the end of a scene, launching into the subsequent plateau of summarized narrative required a change of voice. With transitions thus audibly marked, the striking symmetrical design of the scenario, not unlike that of *The Knight's Tale*, rose into clear view. Book V, in which the action crumbles into a series of innumerable little semi-scenes and long stretches of summarized narrative (the camera-eye, as it were, drawing farther and farther from the action), emerged as dramatically most appropriate, not as the unfinished catch-all it has on occasion been thought to be. In it, the liveliness of dramatic mimicry gradually disappeared. At last, there was only the narrator, *in propria persona* spinning out the sorry end, the final vanity, of even this lovely love and adding his eloquent plea for heavenly love in perfect consonance with his opening proem.

But the students did more than listen. After seven evenings of listening and with daytime classes partly given over to choral practice of pronunciation and to scansion, the students were ready to try reading aloud themselves. With the first two books having been read by the instructor, each student was now assigned approximately a hundred lines from books III and IV. Each afternoon for a week, five students came for twenty-minute interviews. During the interview, each student's understanding and oral Middle English rendering of his passage was checked. Then his rendering of the passage was tape-recorded. In the evening, instead of hearing the instructor read, the audience listened to five fellow-students on tape, and, what was particularly valuable, each student heard himself read. Some six or seven turned out to be remarkably fine

readers, with a quite acceptable grasp of Middle English pronunciation and a fine sense of the dramatic values of the text. For two such readers, the class burst into spontaneous applause. Most readers were a decent average. Only two were inferior and really hard to listen to.

The oral reading of the *Troilus*, thus conducted, occupied exactly one half the course—three weeks, or fifteen class days and evenings. The extra work it entailed was altogether repaid not merely by the high morale which intensified group activity always generates, but by class competence in the more important half of the course which lay ahead. As we turned now to look at the central action of the poem, it required no poky rethinking and searching to isolate what Troilus's initial condition had been; what extrinsic force had initiated his conflict; what internal decision had confirmed and perpetuated it; what single operative character he displayed in each carefully rendered decision; which decision (accompanied by how much debate!) was unquestionably his fateful one; what the necessity and nobility and hence the irony of that decision were; what his final condition was, and why Chaucer added episodes beyond that condition. Examination of the ironies underlying the action as it concerned Criseyde, Pandarus, Hector, and Deiphebus, and the grim lack of irony in the actions of Calchas and Diomedes, was facilitated. Consideration of the scenario—of such questions as whether Chaucer dramatized the key scenes of the plot, whether he dramatized any unnecessary ones, whether their order was useful for the effect of the story, what the symmetries in the scenario achieved—was helped. Discussion of the narrator's own character or *persona*—in his proems, in his intrusive comments, in the epilogue, and everywhere in that choice of words, figures, and details which Nevill Coghill has so happily called Chaucer's "tone of voice," his "perfect tact towards the idea he is

presenting"—was furthered. The contrast between Chaucer's *Troilus* and Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*—in characters and incidents, in tone, in aim and total purport—stood out strikingly.

Finally, the reading and assessment of a score of scholarly criticisms of the *Troilus* appeared to be for the students an impudent delight, not a drudging duty. Whatever else the *Troilus* was, the students *knew* it was no tragedy of Destiny or Fortune. They *knew* Troilus had not turned from a philosophical "way" and become a prey to pride and concupiscent passions. They were quite properly astounded that someone should think he displayed a "craving for failure," an incapacity for "actions relevant to his emotional desires." They had *heard* Criseyde and *seen* that she sported no "middle class virtue," was no "self-seeking and vain" trollop, "an easy victim to the temptations which misled her great mother, Eve." Their experience of the poem made it patent that here was no "romance of a glamorous Middle Age, of a remote Troy, and—for at least one or two precious moments—of a magical nowhere." This fairly disposed of a small boatload of modern critics from Curry and Young to Theodore Stroud and D. W. Robertson, I fear.

This is not the place to examine the rightness of the students' views. *Hoc alius et aliter*. Here, the purpose has been merely to report that one experiment in the use of oral reading as a means of teaching Chaucer's *Troilus* had three principal good effects: it taught students to read Chaucer aloud with reasonable correctness and interest-arousing expressiveness; it gave them a vital experience of the poem which enabled them to reason about the poem responsibly and with ready evidence from the text; and it gave them a personal grasp of the poem against which to measure, with delighted independence, the conflicting interpretations of the poem's many critics.

ANALYZING A NOVEL

R. W. LEWIS

Here is an old army method of instruction that I find valuable in stimulating discussion and research while studying the

novel in sophomore literature classes. First I divide the class into committees of four to six students—depending on the size of

the class and the particular subject of the committee—and then I assign each group some aspect of the novel we wish to analyze. Working with classes of thirty to thirty-five students, I find these six headings convenient: historical background, plot, setting, characters, style, and classification of the novel—a sort of catchall meant to lead to a general critical judgment. The students need some pretty specific idea of what they should be looking for as they read the novel and then discuss it, and so I hand out the following outline that is general enough to be useful in other analyses and specific enough to direct their thinking to details and concrete answers.

I. Historical background

1. When was the novel written? What relation and/or significance does this date have to preceding, contemporary, and/or succeeding events—literary publications and important political, economic, or social occurrences?
2. What place does the novel hold in the author's total work?
3. Are any circumstances of especial interest associated with the composition of the novel? Do these circumstances in any way aid in the better understanding of the novel itself?

II. Plot

1. In about three hundred words give a synopsis of the story.
2. Is there a well unified beginning, middle, and end?
3. If there is more than one action in the novel, show which is the main and which the subordinate plots (subplots).
4. Is anything irrelevant to the main plot? If so, does it serve any purpose?
5. What is the nature of the conflict (or conflicts)? Are there complications to the main problem? Identify the protagonist and antagonist.
6. Is our curiosity aroused? How?
7. What of dilemmas, irony, and foreshadowing?
8. Is the conclusion of the story satisfactory?

III. Setting

1. What is the historic time, place, and social background of the novel?

2. How much time does the action cover? How does the author treat time gaps?
3. Which are the most interesting, striking, or important scenes? Refer to them specifically, describe them briefly, and give your reasons for selecting them.
4. How is the setting presented? With photographic detail? Impressionistically through a few suggestive details? Indirectly through thoughts and actions?

IV. Characters

1. In a sentence or two sum up the appearance and important characteristics of each major character.
2. Which characters change as the story proceeds? Do they change for the better or the worse?
3. Which characters are distinct individuals (round) and which types (flat)?
4. Does every character have a function in the story? What are the functions of the minor characters? Any foils? Are these minor characters interesting in themselves?
5. How are the principal characters presented? By the author's description and comment? By representation of the thoughts and actions of the characters themselves? By observations and comments of the other characters?
6. Are the characters at once realistically consistent and also sufficiently motivated for whatever change occurs in them?
7. Toward which characters does the author show sympathy? Toward which antipathy?

V. Style

1. How would you describe the author's style? Simple and clear-cut, complex and involved? Smooth and graceful, abrupt and harsh? Richly suggestive and implying much, lean and direct?
2. Does the author's style have individuality? Could a book of his be recognized by the style alone?
3. Is there any humor in the novel? Is it quiet or broad?
4. Is the dialogue appropriate to the speakers?
5. How frequent are dramatic situations? How are they reached, by anticipation or surprise? How treated, by sugges-

tion or in detail? How rendered, by dialogue or by description?

6. Are there any different rates of movement in the narrative? Where and why?
7. Do you note abuse of digression?
8. From what point of view is the novel written? Is the point of view consistent? Could it have been changed for the better?
9. Copy some of the striking sentences that you consider full of meaning or particularly remarkable for their freshness of statement.

VI. Classification of the novel

1. On what levels can the book profitably be read? (Plot, characters, emotional effect, theme.) Is this a novel of character with the primary interest being in personalities? Of action, primary interest in events? Of setting, primary interest in environment? Of idea, primary interest in thesis or ethical significance?
2. What is the theme or total meaning of the novel? Do all the elements support that meaning? Are there other comments of significance—i.e., minor themes? Does the author raise questions or try to solve them? Is what he says worth saying?
3. In what general literary tradition was the book written? Realistic, attempting to see life photographically with emphasis on the difficulties, absurdities, animalities, and ironies? Romantic, attempting to see life idealistically with emphasis on the might-be or ought-to-be and avoiding the unpleasant? Naturalistic, fantastic, what have you?

The students also need to be warned that (1) although the questions are separate the answers should be in some unified form; (2) that they must illustrate from the text itself at every opportunity, either giving brief quotations or citing page or chapter numbers; and (3) that if they consult any other authors—which they are not encouraged to do except in the first section—they must carefully credit their sources of fact or opinion.

After appointing a chairman and secretary in each committee, the former to lead its meetings and divide the work load and

the latter to compile the findings of the group, I give them two or three meetings in which to hash out their problems and come up with some mutually satisfactory answers. The secretaries then type the groups' findings (which generally run to two pages per committee) on Ditto masters to facilitate reproduction and compilation of the report, a copy of which is given to each student. Finally, after everyone has had an opportunity to read all the reports, the class meets as a whole again to discuss the complete analysis. Each chairman leads a ten to twenty minute discussion of his group's particular problems and discoveries, directing challenges to the particular committee member responsible for any debatable answer.

This method has certain advantages that make it a valuable supplement to the usual lectures. Primarily it briefly shifts the burden of proof onto the student; he finds what it is like to be a careful critic who must be ready to defend his assertions. Of course, a good student should do this in his individual papers as well, but time simply does not permit us to discuss as a group each student's papers, and reading one or two papers aloud in class is most often only interesting to their authors. This method also draws more students into the give and take so stimulating and desirable in a literature course. Whereas in previous discussions about ten per cent—three or four—of the students volunteered ninety per cent of the discussion, this group method draws out about two-thirds of the class and sometimes succeeds in encouraging them to become vocal members of the class. In addition, both the chairman and secretary of each committee receive a grade based on their part in the report, and this control—though perhaps unnecessary—reassures the reluctant that his performance counts.

Committee work seems desirable from the student's point of view, too. The chairmen report full cooperation from their fellow students, and many find the close analysis aids them in writing their term papers on another novel. Not the least of the group work benefits is the change of pace the different approach makes. Since the questions assume some knowledge of critical terminology, we have lectures and

discussions concerning them that gradually lead into the full scale analysis timed for the middle of the semester. For this reason it would hardly be profitable to have the committee work near the beginning of the semester, and the welcome break in the usual discussions and lectures is best appreciated by the students midway through the term.

The week this work consumes seems

amply justified by the eager, warm discussions within the groups and later among the whole class. The reports themselves need not be underestimated either, and although the students tend to get a thorough knowledge of only one section of the analysis, the sections are so obviously interrelated that, coupled with the reading of the novel itself, the students' understanding should be genuinely broadened.

SOME USES OF LINGUISTICS AND SEMANTICS IN FRESHMAN ENGLISH

BYRON GUYER

I want to discuss six points at which two dimensions or universes of language come together. My experience in drawing on the findings of descriptive linguistics and on the analyses of semanticists for use in freshman English convinces me (as the somewhat similar experience of others has convinced them) that materials from linguistics and semantics are compatible, that they reinforce each other, and that together they make the best course in freshman English that can be given these days. (By semantics I mean any systematic study of the meaning of meaning.) After using these materials in freshman English, in a grammar course for junior-year teacher candidates, and in a methods course for senior and first-year-graduate teacher candidates, I believe that this content and the perspectives towards language inherent in this content measurably increase the student's control of words, word patterns, and ideas. My teacher candidates who have completed their work and are now in the junior highs, senior highs, and junior colleges are beginning to report to me that "this stuff works well with their classes."

Here are the six points: (1) the thorough understanding of the scientific method and the demonstrated ability to use it successfully on a sample of language; (2) the essentially arbitrary relation between a symbol and what it stands for and "nonsense" words and essential signals; (3) giving up the myth of the King's English—acceptance of variety, and appropriateness of language to situation, audience, and speaker or writer; (4) the relation between the theoretical linguist and the

English teacher; (5) ambiguity in syntax and in meaning; (6) understanding of the nature of oversimplification and control of the patterns of syntax to avoid it.

Before plunging into some detail about these areas where linguistics and semantics overlap, let me try to answer a question a reader may be itching to ask: "Why not just teach grammar and syntax on a linguistic model, and then teach whatever is useful from semantics? Or semantics, then applied linguistics? Why interlace material from the two universes?" The answer that satisfies me for the present is that the semantic concepts provide a rational background for the linguistic concepts and the easiest point of contact for the kinds of students I have been working with. My students tend to be earnest, rather literal-minded, and quite naive about language. Nearly all of them, for example, believe the myth that a word is a noun because it names a person, place, or thing. Even worse, they hold this belief solemnly and mean to teach it solemnly when they get into their jobs—a prospect as unpleasing as Orwell's state in 1984.

The scientific method is a marvelous teaching instrument and also the best means available at present for getting near the truth. Students like it because it gives them a useful tool. It seems to me worthwhile in freshman English to begin with a thorough exposition of reasoning from particular to general, of the nature of sampling, of control, and hypothesis, and of the inductive leap to generalization. Furthermore, this method encourages students to

use their minds instead of accepting the mysterious dogma of teacher's intuition about language. Since linguistics is based on the scientific method, the transition from the method itself to its application in language study is easy and pertinent. This is the point in freshman English where students can learn that speech is primary and that writing is secondary and derived. Lead them to discover these places in the language where writing cannot easily convey meaning because it cannot carry over from speech certain important signals. For example, this written sentence loses some signals—"Junior, let that switch alone." By contrast, when this is spoken with the overriding voice modulations of clipping and rasping, or with the voice modulations of openness and roundness, students see for themselves one of the chief reasons why written English must be so much fuller than spoken English to convey the same message. For the first utterance has to be written something like this: "With flushed face and a severe frown, the angry mother bit every word short. 'Junior,' she rasped, 'let—that-switch-alone.'"

At every level of study—phonemic, morphemic, syntactic—linguistics show that the scientific method is worthwhile. Through its use the significant sounds, forms and patterns by which English signals meaning have been transferred from the plane of intuition to the plane of precise, conscious description, where they become manipulable not only intuitively by gifted students but consciously by all students.

A second point at which linguistics and semantics converge is that of the relation of a symbol to what it stands for. As Whorf has shown, English speakers have become habituated to certain vowel and consonant combinations, so that other combinations do not occur. It used to be thought that these other combinations were impossible to pronounce—say *mfpz*. But Whorf has demonstrated that such possibility and impossibility is merely a matter of habit. Within English, then, a new word (symbol for a new referent), say *TV*, will be governed by those phonemic habits which have become established for English. There is nothing intrinsically beautiful or ugly about certain vowel and consonant combinations; deeply established sound-

making habits encourage us to coin *jeep* for a new kind of vehicle, and the normal unwillingness to tackle new and hence at first difficult combinations discourages us from creating the symbol *mfpz* for that handy, hardy little car. Whorf has pointed out also how Lewis Carroll's nonsense words like *toves*, *mimsy*, *borogroves*, and *outgrabe* follow the phonemic patterns established by habit.

A symbol gains significance by arbitrary convention, and so also by convention do sound patterns and syntactical patterns. Plenty of other ways of symbolizing and patterning are equally good; we just happen to have the rooted habit of making our symbols and language the way we do. Once students understand this thoroughly and see language from this perspective, they get free of a good many foolish fears and notions and put their wills and good sense to work. They develop intelligent respect for the power of the conventions of language without superstitious dread.

Third, through studying the reality of language instead of the myth, students become on the one hand intelligently respectful of the enormous force of conventions in language and yet tolerant of the variations of speechways which constitute a dialect. In terms of regional dialect there is no one right way. Here again the arbitrary conventionality of symbols is evident, since the symbol *easworm* of one locale, that of Rhode Island west of Narragansett Bay and one town in the Berkshires settled from Rhode Island, is no more valid than the symbol *mudworm* prevalent in Essex County, Massachusetts and "derivative settlements in New Hampshire," as the *Handbook of the Linguistic Geography of New England* phrases the fact. What matters is the referent intended and understood by the symbol, for the connection between the two is merely arbitrary and conventional. Is *easworm* a better word than *mudworm*? How many angels can dance on the point of a needle? Equally silly are questions about normal varieties of pronunciation, grammar, and syntax framed like the last two so as to preclude language reality.

Fourth, the English teacher has to do something the theoretical linguist doesn't—

help students develop the ability to make valid judgments about language in terms of appropriateness. But to be valid, judgment must be based on facts, and these the linguist supplies to the English teacher. Many English scholars have forfeited the right to be listened to, for their maps of language contain fountains of youth and caves of despair, unicorns and northwest passages existing only in their fancy. The linguists have patiently provided the accurate maps of the real territory of language. For example, Professor Allen pointed out in an article on the linguistic atlases as teaching resources that teachers trained to say *which* for the word *which* may enforce this phonemic pattern on high school students growing up where educated people normally say *wich*. Consider again *earworm* and *mudworm* as another example of this principle. If the student is writing for Rhode Islanders *earworm* is a good choice. But ideally his English teachers will have all the facts and make them available. If that student writes for New Englanders *angleworm* is the more widely known word. If he needs a word which seems bookish to many New Englanders, *earthworm* will suggest that connotation.

Furthermore, the student has to make judgments about language himself. Jefferson pointed out that slaves do not learn democracy by remaining slaves; they have to practice being free men. So also, students of language must learn the factors influencing appropriate language and then refine their judgment by making choices. So long as the teacher usurps by making judgments that are within the student's power to make, the student is robbed of the chance to improve his ability to judge for himself. Therefore, the English teacher had better avoid the role of censor and serve instead as expert reporter and provider of plenty of practice of the real language of men in the real world of affairs as reported by his fellow professional, the linguist.

Linguistic information about the signaling system of English—the voice contours or intonation patterns, the junctures, the morphemes which constitute the affix system, and so on—may very often utilize so-called nonsense words to draw attention to the signal being considered. With logical

sense shorn away, grammatical and syntactical functions stand in clear relief. Students discover new facts about the behavior of their language and bring to consciousness facts learned long ago so well they have been dropped into forgetfulness. Sentences, then, like the following are useful. "Jones skronked his arm so distrousfly that he was unable to bruple derbs for nearly a week. This was a hardship on Jones's crew since he was the best brupler in the plant." *Skronked* has the position and ending of any verb; *distrousfly* has the -ly bound morpheme of adverbs, and appears to have been formed from an adjective *distrousful*, which in turn contains the familiar-ful adjective ending; *to bruple* has the position of an infinitive and precedes *derbs*, which has the -s plural bound morpheme. This -s could not be the third person singular present indicative because of position in this structure. "He was unable to bruple derbs" is structurally similar to "he was unable to eat eggs" or "saw boards" or "change tires."

Fifth, sometimes an intonation pattern and a juncture—and these are important signals in the language—may be linked with ambiguity in logical or lexical meaning to show how these little signals can make a large difference in sense. Consider this syntactical unit:

Woman without her man is lost.

If the speaker says this unit straight through on one voice level, his sense is:

S	V
NAdj. phrase	V
Woman	without her man	is lost.

But if the speaker says these same words with a downward glide of voice on *woman* and then a long pause, followed by an upward glide on *without her* and then a pause, his sense is:

N	Sentence Modifier	S	—	V
Woman.	Without her,	man	is	lost.

Significant signal differences like this one can be precisely and economically handled with linguistic notation. While such notation was avoided in treating the above example, it should be pointed out that teachers of freshman English and their students will find the simple notation of Paul Roberts's *Patterns of English* or that

Rebuttal

John Lydenberg's "Cozzens and the Critics," *CE*, Dec. 1957

LOVE BY ADVERSE POSSESSION: THE CASE OF MR. COZZENS

JOHN T. FREDERICK

Reporting a survey of some fifty novels dealing with World War II, in an article in this magazine for January 1956, I stated my conclusion that *Guard of Honor*, by James Gould Cozzens, was the best of these novels and a work of genuine literary distinction. For a dozen years I have been telling the students in my classes in modern fiction that I regard Cozzens's *The Just and the Unjust* as one of the most notable of recent American novels and its author as perhaps the most promising of our contemporary writers. When a new novel by Cozzens was announced after a long interval, I looked forward to it with high expectations; some enthusiastically favorable reviews, and the fact that it immediately gained the best-seller list, intensified my interest. When finally I was able to obtain a copy of *By Love Possessed*, and read it, I was keenly disappointed. Its actual quality seems to me to justify indictment both of the novel itself as a work of art and of those reviewers who have extolled it. Further, it presents problems which are characteristic and indeed symptomatic in much of our contemporary fiction as a whole, and for this reason are especially worthy of careful consideration.

The aspect of Mr. Cozzens's new novel which first impressed me is its relation to his work of fifteen years ago, *The Just and the Unjust*. Actually, it is in large part a reworking of the material of the earlier novel. The basic subject is the same: the experience of a lawyer in a small Pennsylvania city. The major narrative sequence is in each case the story of a criminal case in which the central character acts as counsel: in *The Just* a prosecution for murder, in *BLP* the investigation of a charge of rape. The ultimate dramatic action is the same in both books; force of circumstances compelling the partial relinquishment of professional ideals—perhaps quixotic—in order to come to terms with the practical word. There are substantial correspondences in all the major characters. In *The Just* the central figure is Abner Coates, a young assistant district attorney. He is placed in dramatic relation to, and is influenced by, his father—also a lawyer—and by his senior associate, the district attorney. In *BLP* the central character is Ar-

thur Winner, a man of middle age who is a partner in a prosperous and respected law firm. He is influenced by his father, one of the founders of the firm, who though dead is a major force in the novel through Arthur Winner's memories of him; and by his partner, Julius Penrose. Coates's father has suffered a paralytic stroke and is partially disabled. Penrose has been crippled by infantile paralysis. There are similar correspondences among the minor characters.

In one aspect, then, *BLP* is clearly an expansion, an extended and enriched version, of the earlier novel. In *The Just* the many minor characters and the numerous subordinate complications are presented concisely though not sparsely, and are firmly related to the central character of Coates and the central story of the murder trial. In *BLP*, minor characters in even greater numbers are given, in most cases, much fuller treatment. A specific example may point the difference. In *The Just* there is a young lawyer of high ideals who gains the favor of Coates. He is presented in dramatic terms on several occasions, but each time briefly and in immediate relation to the progress of the murder trial. In *BLP* there is a similar young lawyer of high professional standards who wins Winner's favor. In this book we are given ten solid pages of exposition and analysis of this young man in Winner's mind—intervening between a question asked by the young man and Winner's reply.

The material so presented is interesting in itself—as in similar material related to other minor characters, similarly introduced—and is brilliantly written. But inevitably it robs the later novel of the sustained momentum, the steadily mounting dramatic tension, which mark *The Just*. Further, the fullness of these individual treatments, their very richness and density, give them a centrifugal effect. The actually rather colorless character of Winner himself, and the essentially trivial events of the elaborated criminal case, prove definitely inadequate to hold them in an integrated whole. The novel becomes digressive in effect, flaccid in structure, ultimately dull.

Mr. Cozzens's style in *BLP* displays a difference from that of *The Just* and indeed of the

whole body of his earlier work, which parallels the change in the treatment of characters and contributes substantially to the effects just noted. His sentences have become longer, more complicated, sometimes so obscure as to necessitate a second reading. Faulknerian echoes appear in the use of parentheses within parentheses, resemblances to the later James in progressively attenuating qualifications. These qualities are not noticeable in such fine passages as the whole incident of Winner's visit to the lakeside resort—perhaps the best thing in the book. They become obtrusive in Winner's interior meditations and in the pontifical utterances of Penrose, which are in sharp contrast to the speeches (similar in function) of Coates's father in *The Just*. Indeed, his ponderous periods, his habitual tone of superiority and infallibility, and his reiterated references to his physical condition combine to make Penrose something of a bore.

It may be argued that Mr. Cozzens's new novel is unified by the theme suggested by its title. There is some evidence that he intended this book to be a treatise on love—distinguished from the earlier novel by being not only a novel about a lawyer but specifically a novel about a lawyer's love life and about love in general. If this be so, thoughtful readers must conclude that the treatise is singularly inadequate. The only kind of love emphasized or extensively treated in *BLP* is that defined by Francis Ellery in Cozzens's *Ask Me Tomorrow* (1940): compulsive, selfish, primarily sexual. This limitation could be defended as characterization of narrowly limited characters were not the subject of love repeatedly and extensively dealt with in general terms, both in the magisterial discourses of Penrose and in the introspection of Winner—but always under the same low ceiling. The relation between Winner and his present (second) wife is rather firmly established as harmonious, sympathetic, and affectionate. But the most emphatic dramatic statement of this harmony is a 600-word account of sexual intercourse. One example of what might be considered unselfish and non-sexual love is vouchsafed: that of Helen Detweiler, a secretary in the office of Winner and his associates, for her younger brother. But we are promptly shown that Helen is sexually abnormal—incapable of understanding and much less of experiencing a normal relation with men; and that this love is destructive. It ends with Helen's suicide, a touch of melodrama required by the somewhat vague and tortuous plot that ultimately compels Winner's partial abandonment of his professional ideals. It is sufficiently ugly in its realistic details, but definitely unmoving.

The treatment of sex in *BLP* raises a more specific question. The novel contains three

extended and explicit accounts of sexual intercourse, and sexual details and images are constantly prominent throughout the book. The problem presented by this emphasis is not, for our present purposes, moral, or even one of good taste. It is esthetic—a question of artistic effectiveness, of auctorial consistency and integrity. The first of the three extended treatments of the sexual act, in connection with the charge of alleged rape, is probably justified: bare, clinical, concrete, it perhaps establishes as could be done in no other way the sordidness of the event and the baseness and selfishness of the characters involved. In the other extended treatments of the sexual act in *BLP* (both experiences of Winner, one in adultery with his partner's wife, the other with his own second wife) the treatment varies, perhaps appropriately. The adulterous encounter is held to the level of sensation, with the most explicit literal details of organs and sense impressions. In the second case, similarly explicit anatomical and tactual details are supplemented by an attempt at poetic expression of emotion by means of rhapsodic prose.

The emphasis on sex which results not only from these three incidents, but much more from the constantly recurring sexual images and sexually suggestive details throughout the book, constitutes a marked departure from Cozzens's earlier practice as a realistic novelist. Yet in *The Last Adam* the relation between Doctor Bull and Janet Cardmaker is abundantly clear without detailed treatment, and serves an essential function in the forceful and wholly admirable characterization of Dr. Bull in that novel. In *The Just and the Unjust* Cozzens manages to convey the completeness of the relationship of Coates and Bonnie Drummond as at once physical and much more without the slightest exploitation of the sexual. In *Guard of Honor* the relation between Captain Nathaniel Hicks and WAC Lieutenant Amanda Turck is marked by sympathy and firm insight, achieving a valid contribution to the total effect of the novel, while remaining entirely free from such emphasis on the sexual as marks *BLP*. This abrupt departure from Cozzens's own earlier example gives the reader a choice between two conclusions. The first of these alternatives we can reject, in view of Cozzens's already assured place as a novelist and the integrity of his earlier work: that, having marked the financial success of such novels as *Peyton Place*, he has undertaken to solicit the patronage of that portion of the reading public which has made those novels best sellers. We are compelled to conclude, then, that he has chosen deliberately to present the subject of love with such emphasis on the merely sexual as he has provided in *BLP*.

Doubtless Cozzens thinks of himself as a realist, and on the showing of the whole body of his work he richly deserves that title as one of honor. He is clearly one of the best we have. But in the treatment of sex in *BLP* he is an inverted sentimentalist: by which I mean that he distorts the subject by excessive emphasis on only one part of it. He is, simply, false to the general truth of human experience.

One other aspect of *BLP* requires attention: its treatment of Catholicism. I approach this subject with hesitation because, though I am not myself a Roman Catholic, I am a teacher at the University of Notre Dame. I am aware that Catholic criticism has not always been just or objective in its judgment of fiction in which Catholicism is treated, and I foresee that those who admire *BLP* will reject anything I may say on this subject as prejudiced because of my connection with a Catholic university. However, I feel that this aspect of the novel is so prominent as to demand consideration.

In at least six preceding novels—*Confusion* (1924), *Cock Pit* (1928), *The Son of Perdition* (1929), *Men and Brethren* (1936), *Ask Me Tomorrow* (1940), and *The Just and the Unjust* (1942)—Cozzens has treated Catholicism briefly and in passing: either in the form of a question as to whether Catholic education is beneficial and/or whether the Catholic faith is conceivably acceptable to a rational person; or in dramatic terms of people, places, action. Each time a negative conclusion is arrived at or an unfavorable impression rendered. No fault can be found with these earlier treatments. They are not extensive or emphasized, and are acceptable as valid elements of the intended characterization. In *BLP* the case is quite different. Here the subject of Catholicism is dramatized or discussed in successive treatments extending through many pages. One of the important characters, the wife of Penrose, Winner's partner and adviser, is approaching or is strongly inclined toward conversion. The friend who is chiefly influencing her in that direction, a Mrs. Pratt, pays a visit to Winner, presumably to discuss the matter with him. Further, Catholicism is the subject of one of Julius's discourses, eight pages in length, and clearly auctorial in tone and sanction, as are the similar extensive interior meditations on the subject by Winner. There can be no question, then, that Catholicism is presented overtly and substantially in this novel as one of its major subjects and purposes.

Ford Madox Ford says in *Joseph Conrad: A Personal Remembrance*, reporting conversations between Conrad and himself on the problems of the writer of fiction, that they agreed that the novelist will do well to avoid topics of

current controversy. If, they further agreed, a writer feels a compulsion to propagandize, "You must then invent, justify and set going in your novel a character who can convincingly express your views. If you are a gentleman you will also invent, justify and set going characters to express views opposite to those you hold." This seems a reasonable and indeed an obligatory standard for the true realist.

In *BLP*, the woman who is said to be approaching conversion—the wife of Penrose—is a drunkard and an adulteress. Her friend who is the only spokesman for the Church in the dramatic action of the novel easily wins the blue ribbon in Cozzens's populous and impressive gallery of unpleasant people. She is vain, selfish, dishonest, sensual. Her chief motive in the visit to Winner is the excitement of her own sexual imagination by inducing him to discuss details of his adulterous relation with Marjorie Penrose. Sexually suggestive details are used so lavishly in describing her and narrating her actions as to become ineffective through monotony and result in an effect of caricature rather than characterization. Further, she is childishly frightened by a snake and as a result is compelled to make a precipitate retreat to the bathroom. In short, she is treated with such obvious malicious contempt as is directed toward no other substantial character in the whole range of Cozzens's fiction. The only other representatives of the Catholic Church mentioned in *BLP* are presented indirectly. Winner discusses with Julius Penrose, and meditates on for several pages, a visit to him by the local priest who has appealed to him, as a member of the school board, against the showing of "sex education" movies in the public high school. Penrose and Winner are especially impressed by Father Albright's faulty pronunciation and his red face, and by his tactless persistence. Finally, there are brief references by Penrose to Mrs. Pratt's "pet monsignor," who is, he thinks, now so busy writing "more or less maudlin best-selling books" and as "a radio and television performer" that he is no longer willing to temporize with Marjorie Penrose in her indecision, and is pressing her, in Penrose's phrase, "to piss or get off the pot."

Cozzens has every right to dislike Catholics and Catholicism, and to express his dislike in his fiction if he chooses to do so. If, however, he introduces the subject with an obvious controversial intention, as he does in *BLP*, and proceeds to treat it in a fashion which is demonstrably unfair—flagrantly so in his choice of characters to represent Catholicism—the product is at destructive variance with his implicit purposes and commitments as a

realistic novelist. He demeans himself as an artist and impairs his book as a work of literary art.

Mr. Cozzens will be little interested in this or any other comment on *BLP*, and rightly so. His "case" is his own concern, and his findings will be apparent in his subsequent work if at all. The case of contemporary American criticism, on the other hand, is one of quite definite public and general concern. Why, when a novelist of high achievement and promise produces a work clearly inferior in significant respects to his earlier work and clearly faulty in relation to accepted standards of realistic fiction, have some of our reviewers hailed the work in such terms as "Summa cum laude," "a marvelous book . . . wise and profound," "clearly his masterpiece," "lifts Mr. Cozzens to a secure place in the whole body of American literature"? There are some positive and highly honorable ex-

ceptions to this paean of praise. But of those reviewers who have quite literally gone overboard there are certain inescapable questions to be asked. Did they view *BLP* through glasses rosily tinted by earlier reading experience? Were their expectations of excellence so strong that they could not achieve objective judgment? Did they scent a certain best seller and hasten to ascend the bandwagon? Or—more probably—have they looked so long and so exclusively at run-of-the-mill current novels in their preponderant mediocrity that they have no other standard of comparison? For certainly in spite of its grave defects *By Love Possessed* contains work vastly superior in many ways to all but a little of contemporary fiction. Whatever the explanation, the facts in the case of too many of our reviewers require a directed verdict of "guilty" on either or both of two counts: (1) incompetence; (2) irresponsibility.

COZZENS AND A CRITIC

JOHN HERMANN

Mr. Lydenberg's article in the Dec., 1957 *CE* sets forth the following argument: mature and intelligent readers like Cozzens; immature and adolescent readers prefer Faulkner or Salinger. I like Cozzens; if you admire Faulkner or Salinger . . . What an interesting piece of logic!

In answer to Mr. Lydenberg: the critics of Cozzens have been silent not because there is nothing to say but because they have been polite. But with Mr. Lydenberg's article, that time is passed. *By Love Possessed*, the novel that has brought Cozzens to notice again, notwithstanding its repeated weeks on the best-seller list is no American masterpiece.

When Spenser sent his knights out to fight, he provided as enemies dragons, magicians, sorceresses against whom the knight could test his character, his strength, his faith. Not so Cozzens with his champion of enlightened conservatism, Red Cross Knight Arthur Winner, who knocks over the largest collection of straw men any novelist has assembled for his hero since Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy. Reading *BLP* is like watching Oklahoma play Southeastern Louisiana State. One finds himself after the first sixty points, after the first hundred pages, building up an immense dislike for Sir Arthur, an immense sympathy for the people whom Sir Arthur's coach, Cozzens, has selected for him to dispose of.

Now at the head of the best-seller list, *BLP* invites comparison with *Peyton Place* which it superseded as favorite; but whereas *PP* put to-

gether a collection of all the hackneyed situations possible in fiction, it did so without subterfuge. Cozzens, under the guise of a mature, major novelist, has put together with approval, in his hero, Sir Arthur, all the dislike the enlightened conservative feels for people of different classes—economic, social, religious—and applauds discreetly as his hero knight demolishes with one stroke of his shining intelligence all the shanty-Irish district attorneys who, eaten by ambition, presume to be judges, all the illiterate Hungarian foreigners whose daughters are not very nice girls, all the fatuous Catholics, all the angry fathers who work in factories rather than in law offices, all the wives who have tried to seduce him, all the adolescents who have given him trouble by not being older.

An attack on such people is always appealing, for it articulates cleverly what inarticulate people cannot do for themselves, and it does it under the sanction, under the aegis, of a "major American novelist." But instead of having his Sir Arthur fight and rout an Hungarian girl, let us say, Cozzens would have him fight an Hungarian refugee. Instead of having his Sir Arthur send the nitwit Catholic, Mrs. Pratt (whose name itself is an indication of Cozzens's level of humor) running to the bathroom to dissipate her mysticism, let us say he measures his Sir Arthur against the character of the priest in Graham Greene's *The Labyrinthine Ways*. In short, Cozzens in setting up his protagonist has written one of the

most intellectually sophomoric books a major novelist has signed his name to.

In addition to this minimizing of opponents for the glory of his hero, Cozzens has lost control of his style. Heretofore, it has been safely correct—ponderous, but his own. Now, however, there is no trouble tracing out, as in a freshman theme, the latest authors that Cozzens, Sir Arthur, has been reading—Tennyson, Shakespeare, Donne—so that reading the description of the amoral son diving upon the training ship, one is forced to recall phrase by phrase "The Eagle" of Tennyson; so that one recognizes, with something of a shock also, that the description of the suicide of the secretary, Helen Detweiler, is from Cleopatra's last speech. Such allusions, such reliance on other peoples' tone for moments of importance, are indicative not of a distinctive prose style of Hemingway or of Faulkner, with whom

Cozzens has been not only hastily but rashly grouped, but of a writer who finding the prose that he characteristically uses unable to carry his idea or his emotion goes to someone else for the image, goes to someone else for help.

One could send Cozzens to Tennyson again, I suppose, for his description of Sir Arthur's love-making to Britomartis: Better to have loved and been silent than to have loved and tried to describe it as Cozzens has. For it is laughter, not passion, that finally shakes Sir Arthur's bed.

A best-seller this novel may be, but the distinction seems slight. A good novel, a novel that puts Cozzens with Hemingway and Faulkner as a "major writer" it certainly is not. And "For Esmé," in retrospect, seems a very good short story indeed, a page of it superior to any of the four hundred in *By Love Possessed*. Even though Esmé is a girl.

COZZENS: SOME RESERVATIONS ABOUT *BLP*

WILLIAM FROST

Having just read *By Love Possessed* and also Mr. John Lydenburg's enthusiastic "Cozzens and the Critics" in the Dec. *CE*, I want to enter a demurrer. Why, asks Mr. Lydenburg, have critics and teachers taken so little notice of Cozzens? Because, I suggest, Cozzens just isn't what he's being cracked up to be. Entertaining and slickly constructed though *BLP* unquestionably is, to confuse it with "one of the finest novels of this century" (I quote the blurb) is like taking Disneyland for the Museum of Modern Art.

Five things, at least, keep *BLP* from being worth more attention from critics and scholars than Cozzens, according to Mr. Lydenburg, has been getting up to now: characterization, style, dialogue, point of view, and setting. Under each of these headings I will try to present, as is only fair, a little specific evidence.

One does not have to read very far into *BLP* to get an idea of what the characterization will be like. Here is Mr. Eliot Woolf, a New York lawyer of Jewish descent but Episcopalian profession: "What line of thought brought Mr. Woolf to perceive error in the faith of his father? What considerations produced the formal abjuring? Had light blasted him, like St. Paul, a little this side of Damascus? Had he, like St. Peter, seen a multitude of fishes and fallen on his knees?" And a few pages further on: "Glimpsing Mr. Woolf's face in the mirror again, Arthur Winner could see his lips form a smile, deprecatory, intentionally ingratiating. . . . Did you forget at your peril the ancient grudge that might be fed if Mr.

Woolf could catch you once upon the hip?"

And here is Miss Helen Detweiler, who, orphaned at sixteen by a boating accident to her parents, has spent thirteen years supporting and making a home for her much younger brother, Ralph: "From a marriage bed, from that loathed warmth, Ralph was plainly Helen's deliverer, and her boy savior. Had a little girl, outside a big bedroom's blank closed door of a hall's late night or early morning, heard a big bed, during the day always neatly made, silent, and motionless, now sounding with dim persistence, with the quicker and quicker rhythmic creak of a horror that was in the end to prove punishable by drowning? Who knew? Helen herself might not be allowed to remember."

Who knew? Well, the novelist evidently did—the trouble being just that this particular novelist knows so much and knows it so patly. From the plain spinster engaged to the much-mothered clergyman to the nymphomaniacal wife of the cynical crippled attorney, from Noah Tuttle, the octogenarian fuddy-duddy, to Veronica Kovacs, the teen-aged tart from the other side of the tracks ("I gather the girl comes from down the county; Pole; Hungarian; or something"), the portraits in the Cozzens gallery have a much too predictable look; the Freudian or socio-economic wheels that move the puppets are far too well oiled. If, in Mr. Cozzens's world, one runs into an effeminate-appearing man who has been at one time suspected of immoral intentions towards boys, what will he turn out to be, by vocation of avocation? A choirmaster.

Of much of the prose in this novel the extracts just quoted concerning Mr. Woolf and Miss Detweiler can stand as fair samples: smooth, rhetorical, and efficient. More rhetorical—at times over-rhetorical—are the passages in which the college-bred protagonist couches his musings in phrases extracted from a number of authors, mostly poets, and worked into the flow of the narrative; in general, this literary feat is gracefully enough performed, even when one jumps, as on page 401, from *MacFlecknoe* to *King Lear* in the space of four lines. Turgid indeed, however, are the occasional passages of Cozzens's own prose-poetry manufactured for such special occasions as the mating, on pages 264 to 265, of the protagonist and his wife. For literary sex, give me the third book of *Troilus and Criseyde* any day, in preference to this.

Like his prose in general, Cozzens's dialogue tends to be "literary" in both the good and bad senses of that word—good in its handling of uneducated speech, for example, where the choice of idiom is ordinarily both tactful and convincing (he never tries for merely dialectal effects). On the other hand, his educated characters have an awkward tendency to address each other in complete essays or editorials: one on the origins of anti-Semitism in Brocton, for example, or another (pp. 224-225) on the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. These essays are sometimes witty, informed, even mildly epigrammatic ("if hypocrisy can be said to be the homage vice pays to virtue, theology could be said to be a homage nonsense tries to pay to sense"); but as representations of human speech—even of the conversation of eloquent lawyers—they are too highly structured to be convincing, and some of them are also dull. There is a Mrs. Pratt, for example, who must be one of the least interesting windbags in modern fiction; she talks largely in essays.

My main objection to the novel's point of view toward life is that it seems to me—like some of the characterization—too crude and oversimple to merit the attention Mr. Cozzens's admirers think scholars and critics should pay this novel. Early in the story, for example, we

see through the eyes of Mr. Woolf, on a visit from New York, the home of the protagonist: "Then he looked past the gate, set back with formal curved wings and white posts with urn-topped finials, to the drive and up the long lawn under the sycamores to the ample house whose solid walls in harmonious shades of aged, uncoursed fieldstone rose luminous and warm in the dappling of the sun across them." Mr. Woolf is at once impressed: "This Brocton might remain an unsequential town; but he could guess, gratified, that this company he kept was the most superior the town had to offer—people with nice properties," etc. Despite a touch of irony at Mr. Woolf's expense ("Mr. Woolf . . . had plainly made a rapid computation and revised upward certain estimates"), the distinction between the responses of this mildly satirized metropolitan Babbitt and those the reader is meant to feel toward the subject-matter of the novel never becomes precisely sharp.

Which brings me to Brocton, the value-center of *BLP*; Brocton, the community in which Mr. Cozzens's puppets live their lives; in terms of which they order their relations to each other; and to preserve the decencies of which they ultimately sacrifice their integrities. Brocton, alas, remains only a name, unrealized in a novelist's sense—you cannot see it, feel it, touch it as you can Chandrapore in *A Passage to India* or Equity in *A Modern Instance* (Howells, Mr. Lydenburg reports, has been suggested as a parallel figure to Cozzens). Or one could mention St. Paul, Minnesota, or West Egg, Long Island, in the fiction of Fitzgerald; or the town in Alan Seager's "This Town and Salamanca." Or Hardy's Casterbridge, for that matter, or—but stop! Is not all this very unfair to Mr. Cozzens? What is the evidence that his latest novel is entered for any such stakes? Why can't it be taken for escape literature only, solid entertainment a bit more intellectual than J. P. Marquand? Very well; I acquiesce; my reservations are cavilling merely—but in answer to Mr. Lydenburg's article I must protest that talk of Ph.D. theses on Cozzens or of Cozzens as a staple author in American literature courses seems to me premature.

POSSESSED BY LOVE, DEATH, AND TAXES

A. M. TIBBETTS

As a writer who wants both critical and financial success, it occurs to me that I have been following the wrong ideas in writing fiction. Therefore, in order to practice my new art, I have written the following sketch. I am a novice at this kind of thing, and of

course I will have to rewrite my little piece; there are some clear places in it.

I

The trouble with me is, thought Arthur Dinner as he massaged his tender stomach

with his left hand (he wasn't really left-handed—it was merely that he had sprained his right hand earlier winding the great brocade clock that stood in old Joshua Kettle's bedroom (the clepiastic clock that symbolized all that old Joshua stood for: honesty, fortitude, New England crustiness—)); but Arthur Dinner was wandering. What was it his first wife, Charity, had said? "Arthur Dinner, your stomach is like a pear." But, as it turned out, the remark was not poor Charity's first attempts at lovemaking; not because Charity was frigid (she was; there was no doubt of that), but because she recognized that the bulge in Arthur Dinner's abdomen presaged the first tender onslaughts of the spiritual decay that the body's falling away symbolized—in short, to be brief, appendicitis. And while Arthur Dinner writhed on the table under the surgeon's knife (some unkind wit in the lovely, aristocratic, Republican New England town was ungentelemanly enough to murmur something about the Dinner table), Charity died, leaving Arthur Dinner with a child to bring up, Lillian, Lil for short; and Arthur Dinner, wise as he was, wise as the lawyer is wise, wise as the aristocrat is wise, did not fret about his pale wife's death—and lived on.

2

"It is your masochistic elegance, Arthur," said Julian Penwipe, his oldest friend. "You have the durable faith of the psychotic; you hear the puny call of meddlesome mankind down the halls of *Time*; however, you are not a loose liver; you have *some* sympathy; but I, I am different—" (Julian was different, truly; he was a basket case; that is, to explain: he had no arms and legs. He pointed his cane at the fireplace; he had to hold it in his mouth to do so)—"I," continued Julian, "despite my manual and pedal infirmities, or—ha ha—lack of them, I love my wife, even though, *Ave Atque Vale*, she doesn't love me."

"One must get along, Julian," Arthur Dinner said softly.

"Yes, yes indeedy," said Julian. "But you must recognize my problem with Marjoram. Ah," he said aiming the cane shakily at the mantelpiece, "ah, what price man payeth for certainty. Does she or doesn't she. Belief in the Democratic Party has made my wife a different woman. She runs with a charming, college crowd; as Gilbert would have said, the peripatetics of long-haired esthetics. I find," he said with a wry smile (he was forced to drop his cane in order to smile wryly), "that both my wife's mind and her bed are frequently occupied nowadays."

Arthur Dinner stirred. He, too, remembered

the search with Marjoram, through time and space, defined only by the box of love. Stained mattresses and a stained conscience. *His* conscience, he knew, he had under control; but Marjoram's was under the control of the Democratic Party. Arthur Dinner thought of his second wife, Hadda, while his friend, Julian Penwipe, rambled brilliantly on. Hadda was an athletic woman, being a P.E. major at Brooton Junior College. She was very tough, Arthur reflected. Once, after a session on the love mat, it had taken them all night to get loose from one another. Well, Arthur Dinner thought, one must live on.

3

The sound of his friend's voice was soothing, and Arthur Dinner was able still for a little while (although it couldn't be for long—Julian was pointing the cane desperately at him now, again, and waving his stumps—) to think his own conservative thoughts about life. Consider Mrs. Pooler—the Democratic Party Committeewoman—who had caught him in the bathroom with no clothes on; standing there at the cracked door, her mighty body pushed against it, she forced him inexorably backward until at last she was there, with him; and he sat on the toilet seat and she on the edge of the bathtub; and with her terrible, soft female logic she washed over him her creed of faith. "I believe," she said; "and how good it feels to have faith." She put her hand on his wet leg (for he had not had a chance to wipe with a towel after his bath); "I believe, and so must you; for the Faith stands between us and the starving Millions. You have," she continued softly, yet loudly, "your Rock, the Law; what is right, what is wrong; I have the Party, what is right and what is never wrong."

"No, no," shouted Arthur Dinner, deep in a second-level flashback from which he was extremely lucky to have gotten out of—

"Yes, yes!" said his friend, Julian Penwipe. "I knew that crafty, gently wise old Joshua Kettle, to whom we looked up to lo these many decades, had been embezzling Liberty Bonds, carrying them out of the company safe, one by one in his cigarette holder; I knew but you did not. Because (and he pointed his cane at the fireplace, talking with difficulty around the handle) because you believe in the Law, and what kind, old Joshua was doing was unlawful."

The world of Arthur Dinner reeled. "But—" he murmured, "we must live on; life must be lived; *tempus fugit*; old age must be served." And Arthur Dinner thought with a budding tenderness of the sufferings of his poor, suffering friend. "Oh, Julian," he cried in loud but

dignified anguish, "I must tell you the truth. I, too, have had an affair with Marjoram."

"Yes, I know," said the man with the cane. "But I really don't care about that. While you and Marjoram wrestled in *gemütliche* embrace in the summer house, Hadda and I—" he bellowed at the memory, this lusty, gusty man. "We, too, Arthur Dinner, were possessed by love."

4

But Arthur Dinner was philosophic. "No matter what," he said, "although I am not an existentialist, I must say, in spite of you all—old Joshua Kettle; Charity, my first wife; Rafe, the rapist whom as a Lawyer I am defending; Broton's Negroes, who must learn to keep their place; you, Julian Penwipe; your wife, Marjoram; and finally, my second wife, Hadda—I must state that *life must be lived*—"

"Ha! No! That's the least of it," shouted Julian Penwipe happily, pointing his cane at Arthur Dinner for the last time, "for I, who know that the best Law is the Law that laughs last, thus end your life." So saying, he shot Arthur Dinner through the left centrifugal ventricle with his cane, which was in reality a disguised weapon, a gun.

5

And the last thing that Arthur Dinner saw as he fell to the floor, while the memory of the dinging sounds of old Joshua Kettle's clock were in his ears—the last thing he saw before he died, was the vision of the two women in his life (his second wife, Hadda, and his lover, Marjoram) converging happily on Julian Penwipe, lifting his stump-bedizened body between them, and striding purposefully through the door.

Letter to the Editor

Sir:

It's dangerous to read Mark Twain with a slumbering sense of humor. Tyrus Hillway, I think, illustrates this danger in his note (*CE*, Jan. 1958), chiding both Mark Twain for not being clear and his readers for not noticing the positions of the boards in Tom Sawyer's fence. For which is a more serious misreading, after all—to see Tom's fence as made of boards placed vertically (which is what Hillway complains of), or to see it nine feet high and thirty yards long (as Hillway himself does)?

It's clear that Mark Twain thought of the fence as made of horizontal boards (though that thought is expressed only in the one word *topmost*). It's clear, too, that Twain *says* the fence was nine feet high and thirty yards long. But one does not have to read far in *Tom Sawyer* to realize that Twain sometimes exaggerates for effect: the first dozen lines of Chapter I will suffice.

This fence, which Twain early in Chapter I calls "the high board fence," is, let us say, higher than the Thatchers' fence of Chapter III, over which Tom and Becky become

acquainted. But it is not too high for Tom to scramble over "on the instant" at the start of Chapter I, and again early in Chapter III, where we are told it is quicker for him to escape over the fence than through the gate. How quickly can a small boy scramble over a nine-foot board fence?

But Tom scrambles over the fence *behind* the house; perhaps the fence is higher in front? Perhaps. Still, I invite you to picture the house Tom lived in—either the tiny building preserved in Hannibal or the one casually described in *Tom Sawyer*—and to picture the owner setting up in front of this house a solid board fence nine feet high and thirty yards long!

To a penalized small boy bearing white-wash—yes, it is easily that high. In fact, Twain might as well have made it twelve feet high, or twenty. But to the reader visualizing the actual scene? No, no, let us see over this fence. It is the creation of impressionistic humor, not of carpenters.

ROBERT C. COSBEY

ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

Current English Forum

CONJUNCTION AS

R. J. GEIST

As introducing a full subject-verb clause has been paraphrased thus: *to the same degree in which; in the same manner in which or with which; during the time that, while; since, it being the case that; though; that, who, which; a fact, practice, etc., which* (*Webster's New Collegiate*). To these meanings can be added: *what* (Uncle Hugh thought children should do exactly *as* they wished to do); *and; and . . . also* (Even if we assume, *as* we probably can, that . . . ; Their manners helped, *as* did their pleasant manners and dialect); *in the state or form in which* (He described Philadelphia *as* it was in 1850); and a fusion of various possibilities like form, degree, manner, amount (There is wide dissatisfaction with aid to those areas *as* it is now given). Because of these multiple meanings, *as*, like many other words, can be ambiguous. Attention to individual sentences in context, rather than a proscription of any of the verified meanings of *as*, will cure whatever ambiguity may be objectionable.

Fries (*American English Grammar*, pp. 221-222) has pointed out that *as* introduced a clause of cause or reason about 2½ times as often in his Vulgar English letters as in his Standard English letters. Causal *as* occurred frequently in the Standard English letters, however—about 50% of the time that the conjunction *as* was used. It occurred far less frequently in a study of about 600 pages of *Harper's Magazine* (Jan.-June 1957) and about 600 pages of *PMLA* (LXXI, 285-862). Of 931 *as*-clauses¹ in the 1200 pages only 16 were purely causal—e.g.:

... but *as* the paper fell foul of the censorship soon after, Zola had time to contribute only 3 articles (*PMLA*, 354)

As Shakespeare had used purgatory in that

¹Not included in the count were constructions using correlative or antecedent forms like *such . . . as, same . . . as, so . . . as, as . . . as*; multiple-word conjunctions like *as if, as though, as long as, as well as; and as follows*.

instance, it is not improper to assume that Claudio may be contrasting the pains of purgatorial expiation with the eternal pains of hell (*PMLA*, 488)

He wrote to Child that he had a great success, "but how great I do not know, *as* the Rev. Father is producing the chief treasures from some repository in the private part of the mansion which no ordinary mortal is allowed to enter" (*PMLA*, 517)

Another field of knowledge into which Lizardi dipped was that of medicine and drugs, with which he was probably early familiar, *as* his own father was a doctor (*PMLA*, 427)

Her dinners can become intellectually exhausting, *as* the guests are expected to be as knowledgeable as the hostess (*Harper's Feb.*, p. 36)

It is best to smell it in sunshine, *as* all good things are even better when the circumstances are toward (*Harper's, Mar.*, p. 98)

... *as* he is on duty he cannot accompany her now) (*Harper's, Apr.*, p. 35)

As he was well aware that he had not behaved with godlike restraint himself, his profound mistrust of human nature reasserted itself (*Harper's, May*, p. 72)

As probably functions distinctively in sentences where both causal and progressing-time notions are present—e.g.:

So much is this so that in the watching of it the eye loses it as sight and sense drowsily merge and blend (*PMLA*, 293)

As Mörike's interest in the occult lessened, he evidently desired to limit her prominence in the story (*PMLA*, 404)

Then explosions would follow one upon another *as* the Japanese brought their grenade throwers to bear (*Harper's, Jan.*, p. 35)

As he came really to know them . . . , he began to suspect that there was . . . less blood-in-the-nostrils in their approach than he had supposed (*Harper's, Jan.*, p. 78)

The conjunctions *for, because, since, when, while* would not express the same fusion of ideas.

Fowler's caveat (*Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, p. 31) against the use of causal *as* after the clause modified seems

to have borne little fruit either among textbook writers or writers in general. Fries states and illustrates that causal *as* occurs both at the beginning of the sentence and

within the sentence. In the *Harper's PMLA* study, 8 of the 16 *as*-clauses of cause or reason preceded the clause modified, 8 followed it.

Questions on usage should be sent to the chairman of the NCTE Committee on Current English, Professor Margaret M. Bryant, Department of English, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn 10, N. Y.

Letter to the Editor

Sir:

In his admirable appraisal of C. S. Lewis's "science-fiction" trilogy in the May *CE*, Charles Moorman has emphasized an aspect of Lewis's contribution to modern letters too often overlooked by the literary historian: Lewis the myth-maker. Lewis's popular reputation, especially in this country, depends almost solely on his *Screwtape Letters*, and even students of Lewis, who tend to think of him as a witty, often profound, Christian apologist, are usually surprised to discover that he has actually written more fiction than anything else. Thus Mr. Moorman's article on the trilogy renders a long-needed service in emphasizing, as it does, Lewis's virtues as a myth-maker.

I cannot understand, however, why Mr. Moorman limited his remarks to the trilogy in what I assume was meant to be a general appraisal of Lewis's place in contemporary fiction: As he was considering Lewis's achievement as a myth-maker some mention, at least, ought to have been made of the seven *Narnia* books (Macmillan, 1950-1956), a cycle of fairy-stories in which Lewis's mythopoeic imagination flies on even higher wings than it does in the trilogy. Lewis's perhaps unique achievement as a myth-maker in these tales is that he not only creates the imaginary kingdom of *Narnia* (literally creates it in a manner that parallels that of the authors of *Genesis*), but he describes a good bit of its history, populates his imaginary world with a wealth of characters, some of whom have sources in literature and legend, and then destroys it—literally destroys it by presenting us with a sort of Narnian Armageddon. I cannot help

feeling that any discussion of Lewis as myth-maker, even if it deliberately concentrates on his achievement as such in the trilogy (admittedly his major work of fiction) cannot well afford to leave the *Narnia* books unmentioned. Nor are the *Narnia* books the only other works of fiction in which Lewis acts primarily as a myth-maker. Recently Lewis published *Till We Have Faces; a Myth Retold* (Geoffrey Bles, 1956), a novel which reinterprets the Psyche-Cupid myth. In some ways Lewis is more successful as a myth-maker in this work than any of the others; he turns his mythopoeic imagination inwards and (historically) backwards, illuminating the war between Good and Evil in the human soul as well as recreating a dark, half legendary historical period.

As Mr. Moorman points out, Lewis tends to take myth far more seriously than do most of us. Many of the so-called Christian myths are, for him, literally true. Even pagan myths have some elements of truth in them. Lewis's profound interest in myth shows itself in all his novels. There is even some myth-making in his first work of fiction—*The Pilgrim's Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (1933)—Mother Kirk's description of the "Garden of Eden," for instance. As a Christian myth-maker C. S. Lewis has no rival in this century. He is doing for us what the great nineteenth century myth-maker, George MacDonald, did for his contemporaries, and he is doing this not merely in his trilogy but in all his fiction.

CLINTON W. TROWBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Councilletter

THE COUNCIL MOVES FORWARD

HELEN K. MACKINTOSH
PAST PRESIDENT

Each year members of the National Council of Teachers of English individually and collectively need to be analytical, speculative, and critical as they evaluate the effectiveness of the organization. The immediate Past President of the Council is given this responsibility with respect to the Council committee structure, and the work of committees as they endeavor to give continuity to the activities, programs, publications, and goals of all teachers of English.

Over a period of years it is probably accurate to say that approximately thirty committees are usually at work making studies, preparing bibliographies, carrying on research projects, developing publications, or exploring the worthwhileness of ideas for improving many aspects of English teaching. From time to time the Executive Committee has looked at the structure and activities of such committees and has considered means of improving and coordinating their work. A year ago Luella Cook was appointed to serve as chairman of a sub-committee authorized to re-examine Council committee structure. She, with Harold Allen and J. N. Hook, explored the possibilities of securing better coordination of committee work as well as providing for a wider distribution of responsibility in planning annual convention programs. The report of the Executive Committee made at the Minneapolis meeting indicated that committees are of two general types, one concerned with major areas, and the other with publications and public relations from an administrative point of view. The report proposed ten categories representing major areas within which most of the existing committees might be classified. These were: communication, conditions affecting teaching of the language arts, correlation with other subject areas, curriculum in its various aspects, language and linguistics, literature,

reading, research, teaching aids, and teacher training both pre-service and in-service.

As a result of the discussion of this report, the Executive Committee set up a special committee to give continuing attention to following up the initial study of committee structure. This committee will be drawn from the membership, with the Executive Committee represented by only one member. As a further outgrowth of the report, the Executive Committee established a program advisory group to assist the Second Vice-President, upon request, in planning the Friday programs of the organization. In the post-convention session members of this committee were appointed for 1957-1958.

As a parallel development to this study of committee structure, the Executive Committee had agreed at their mid-winter meeting in March 1957 that the Executive Secretary should poll the chairmen of the thirty working committees to learn which of them felt that their work was at such a stage that it would be profitable for them to attend a session at Minneapolis sponsored by the Executive Committee. The purpose of the session was to give chairmen an opportunity to talk among themselves concerning their problems and to share worthwhile ideas for expediting committee work. The Executive Committee in its planning believed that it would be profitable to invite not more than ten such committee chairmen who planned to be in Minneapolis and who were interested in such an opportunity. The result was that nine committee chairmen spent two hours in conference. In view of the importance of the report on committee structure previously described, Luella Cook gave a summary to which they reacted favorably.

The chairmen discussed successful ways of communicating with committee members in order to get responses. The use of a mimeographed newsletter to provide

news of, progress made was generally accepted as being especially helpful. The use of a ballot or voting form in duplicate, one copy of which could be made out easily and forwarded to the chairman, and the duplicate retained, provides an excellent means of getting prompt responses from committee members, since it does not require the writing of a letter. It was proposed also that in selecting members for such committees of the Council, appointments not be made until it was possible to learn whether or not the persons so appointed would accept responsibility and not merely membership on the committee. The group agreed that a similar meeting with other committee chairmen should be scheduled for 1958 with the number limited to not more than nine or ten chairmen, with first opportunity going to those not present in 1957.

One of the important developments in terms of new committees established concerned the setting up of a Publications Committee. Members of the Council are aware that the late Dr. Max Herzberg gave long service to the organization as Director of Publications. At the Minneapolis meeting he received the W. Wilbur Hatfield award for that service as well as for other conspicuous contributions to the Council. Dr. Herzberg's retirement from the responsibility for publications resulted in the establishment of a Committee on Publications which will consist of the Executive Secretary and the three Section Chairmen. Proposals for new publications will go to this committee according to a definite plan. Projects in progress will be submitted to this committee for approval. Competent readers will evaluate completed manuscripts as a basis for accepting, rejecting, or modifying them. Such a plan should bring

about more and better coordination in all aspects of the publications program.

Other new committees established include one on linguistic terminology. This committee will be exploratory and advisory in character, and will seek cooperation of other organized groups in the field of English. A committee will work on problems connected with the newly-established program of Awards to Superior High School English students. Details of this program have already been presented to the Affiliates.

The action taken to establish a Commission on the English Profession deserves widespread publicity. Such a step will need to be taken carefully under the guidance of the Executive Committee. Another interesting development which has been under way for more than a year is the Cooperative English Program now about to get under way on an exploratory basis in cooperation with the Modern Language Association, The American Studies Association, and the College English Association. Only as discussion and meetings lead to working agreements may the actual program be established.

Members will follow with special interest the activities of the Research Committee established in 1956, but getting under way in 1957. This committee has interesting plans to initiate research, and to put into easily available form research studies in the language arts, recognized as basic and authoritative.

Since the actual work of the Council is carried on by committees, the membership has a responsibility to become familiar with the organization and activities of these groups which give generously of their time to make goals and beliefs concrete and useful.

THE HERZBERG PRIZE

Shortly before he died in February, Max Herzberg gave \$5000 to Douglass College, the women's college of Rutgers, as a fund to establish an undergraduate prize in American literature. The annual

award, to be called the Edna N. Herzberg Prize in honor of the late Mrs. Herzberg, will go to the junior or senior writing the best essay on a specified subject.

News and Ideas

PRACTICE IN READING OR PRACTICE in writing? Which is the best way to get better writing from freshmen? Mary Mills (Wisconsin State Teachers College, Whitewater) reports in the Autumn *Journal of Developmental Reading* on an experiment she performed. She concludes that students with no direct instruction in writing techniques, but with intensive training in basic reading skills, such as identification of the central idea of an article and development of vocabulary, came to write better themes and to observe more carefully the conventions of grammar. She recommends as a text *The Meaning in Reading* by Wise, Congelton, and Morris (Harcourt, Brace).

GRAY'S "ELEGY" IS UNDERGOING a revival as an object of scholarship. A major question is, whose epitaph is it that concludes the poem? The latest episode is in the August *Modern Philology*, where John Sutherland (Colby) objects to the prevalent theory that the stonecutter is both the central figure of the poem and the subject of the concluding epitaph. Sutherland feels that the narrator of the poem is also the subject of the concluding epitaph—neither the stonecutter nor Gray himself, but a fictionalized, educated, and charitable young gentleman.

THE AMBIVALENCE OF GRAY'S "Elegy" is the subject of an article by A. E. Dyson in the July *Essays in Criticism*. He feels that the concluding epitaph is Gray's and goes on to analyze the emotional complexities of the poem. With the revival of interest in the poem and the daily appearance of new scholarly journals, we count on an announcement of a Gray's "Elegy" Newsletter at any moment.

ROBERT B. HEILMAN (UNIVERSITY of Washington) CE adviser, won the \$200 *Explicator* award for the best book of *explication de texte* in 1956 with *The Magic Web: Action and Language in Othello*.

THE "HOWL" TRIAL—THAT IS, THE charges brought by the city of San Francisco against the City Lights Pocket Book Shop for "willfully and lewdly publish[ing] and sell[ing] obscene and indecent writings" is the subject of an article in the 12 December *Reporter* by David Perlman. The writing in question is, of course, Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl." The principal witness for the defence was Mark Schorer, professor of English at the University of California, writer, and former CE adviser. Judge Clayton W. Horn ruled that while Schorer could not testify as to whether or not "Howl" was an obscene poem, he could state whether or not he thought that the controversial language in the poem was "relevant" to the intent and theme of the poem. Schorer testified that Ginsberg "uses necessarily the language of vulgarity." Perlman reports that it was sometimes difficult to tell which the prosecutor objected to more—the poem's "dirt" or its incomprehensibility. Walter Van Tilburg Clark and Kenneth Rexroth also testified for the defence, and Rexroth called "Howl" probably the most remarkable single poem published by a young man since the second war." Gail Potter, a writer, and David Kirk, assistant professor of English at San Francisco, testified for the prosecution. Judge Horn decided that "an author should be real in treating his subject and be allowed to express his thoughts and ideas in his own words," and that "Howl" was not obscene or indecent.

"HOWL" ITSELF IS REPRINTED IN the second issue of *The Evergreen Review*, an issue devoted to "the San Francisco Scene." It includes, besides Ginsberg's poem, poems by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the publisher of "Howl," and Josephine Miles (California), and articles by Henry Miller and Kenneth Rexroth.

EXCERPTS FROM VLADIMIR NABOKOV's *Lolita* occupy the largest part of the second *Anchor Review*. F. W. Dupee contributes a preface, and Nabokov himself appends a short essay on the novel.

The man who reads dictionaries



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